the Concordia Lutheran

"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path." Ps. 119:105.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture**, what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or a false church, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.

The President's Column

Saul was a changeable man! David experienced Saul's mood changes. At first David had found favor in the sight of King Saul who would often call for David to come and play the harp for him. Later when David slew Goliath, Saul was well-pleased with David and set him over the men of war. But Saul's high regard for David soon changed to jealousy and hatred. Because of the attempts on his life, David was forced to flee from Saul. Later when Saul acknowledged his sin and asked David to return, he did not do so because it was obvious to him that he could not trust Saul. David knew that Saul was a changeable individual. But is this not true with men? We need but recall the change that came over the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem from Palm Sunday to Good Friday! Remember how the people openly welcomed Jesus as the promised Messiah, even spreading their garments in the way and waving the palm branches in their great joy? How their mood changed when Pilate brought Jesus forth and they shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (Luke 23:21).

People will be just as changeable in 1996 in their thoughts and actions. Even we Christians, because of our sinful flesh (Rom. 7:18), are all subject to various mood changes depending upon our circumstances and emotions. One day we may be happy and joyful - the next day depressed and sad as the woes of this life seek to overwhelm us.

What a comfort for us Christians as we begin another year of grace to know that God is unchangeable! The Lord says of Himself, "For I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3:6). "Jesus Christ the same

yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). In 1996 God's love, kindness and mercy will remain ever the same as in the past. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Is. 54:10).

But someone may ask: What about those Scripture passages which ascribe to God a change of mind? After the Fall of Man into sin the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually. And Scripture then tells us, "And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Gen. 6:6). And when Saul, the first king of Israel, disobeyed God's clear command, the Lord said, "It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following Me, and hath not performed My commandments" (1 Sam. 15:11). When Jonah told the inhabitants of the city of Nineveh that they were going to be destroyed in forty days, then they all repented in sackcloth and ashes. And then we read in Scripture, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not" (Jonah 3:10).

When Scripture ascribes to God a change of mind, then it does so to conform to our way of thinking. The Scriptures plainly state, "God is not a man, that He should repent" (1 Sam. 15:29). God is indeed unchangeable. He is not the one who changes, but rather man! In every one of those passages which I have given that speak of God's repenting, we find that it is man that changed and not God! Man was created in perfect holiness and righteousness, but he changed by falling into sin. When the Lord told Samuel to anoint Saul to be the king of the Israelites, then everything went well until Saul changed by no longer keeping God's commandments. When the Ninevites were told of their destruction

in forty days, then they changed by repenting before the Lord. Thus in every case it was not the Lord who changed, but man himself! (Cp. Christian Dogmatics by F. Pieper, Vol. I, page 440)

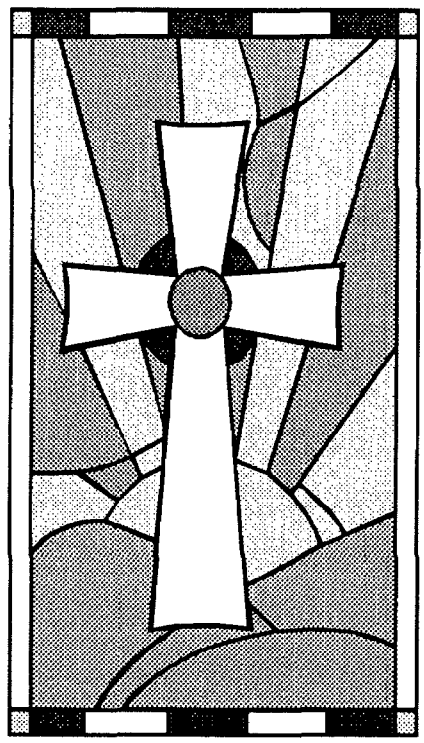
God is unchangeable. What a warning to the unbelievers since God's wrath remains the same. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). It is a lie of the father of all lies (John 8:44), that the wrath of God will change and He will not vent forth His righteous wrath upon the unbelievers. God will not change! The Lord Jesus says concerning the destruction of the unbelievers, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44). Whoever refuses to humble himself before God by sincerely confessing his sins and accepting what Jesus has already earned for him - forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life - such will experience the unchangeable wrath of God. Those who despise the grace of God in Christ and seek to enter heaven by way of their own works will also be told, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). Such is the case also with all those who dream of a second chance or opportunity after they have departed this life. They think that after their death God will not immediately cast their souls into everlasting destruction, but rather that He will grant them a second chance to repent and be saved. But the Holy Scriptures know of no such teaching. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Whoever thinks that he can wait until after his death to repent, will only experience to his everlasting sorrow the unchangeable wrath of God!

On the other hand, God's kindness, mercy, love and goodness will always remain the same for those who sincerely believe in Him and His salvation, and who desire to follow Him. Everything else in this life is unstable and cannot be depended upon: riches do not last, friends often forsake us, our health inevitably gives way to various sicknesses and finally to death. But God, our gracious and

heavenly Father who loves us in Christ our dear Savior, remains unchanging and His gracious promises stand fast. He will continue to bless and keep us at all times. This should serve to strengthen our faith in Him and His Word so that we continue, year after year, to place all of our confidence and trust in the unchangeable God and in His unchangeable Word of Truth and plead in the words of that well-known hymn -

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see.
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me!

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor M. L. Natterer, President



[Editor's Note: At the request of the President of our Conference, the following article on Bible translations is being presented. This article is an extended quotation of the text of Section 13 of Volume I of Dr. Franz Pieper's CHRISTIAN DOGMATICS, pages 343-349, entitled, "The Original Text of Holy Scripture and the Translations." It was then the decision of the Editor to devote the greater part of this entire issue to selected sections from Pieper's three-volume work. Hence the articles following this initial article are also taken from Pieper.]

13

The Original Text of Holy Scripture and the Translations

Since Scripture is intended for the use of all Christians, of whatever station, sex, age, etc. (Deut. 6:6-9; Joshua 1:8; Is. 34:16; Neh. 8:2-8; 2 Kings 23:1-2; Luke 16:29 ff.; John 5:39; 20:31; Acts 17:11: "They searched the Scriptures daily"; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 John 1:4; 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 3:15; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27: "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren"), it is God's will that the Scriptures be translated into the various human languages. And accordingly the Church, from its beginning, made it a point to furnish translations of Scripture into foreign languages. We do not say that it is absolutely necessary that one must read the Scriptures in order to be saved. What is absolutely necessary is the knowledge of those fundamental articles of the Christian faith through which repentance and faith in the remission of sins purchased by Christ is brought about in man (Luke 24:46-47), and this knowledge may be obtained by the mere hearing of a Scriptural sermon or instruction. The dogmaticians teach that a man may come to faith and thus become a member of the Christian Church without as much as knowing that there is a Holy Scripture. Gerhard: "It is not simply and absolutely necessary to salvation to believe that there are any divine Scriptures if this unbelief issues from simple ignorance, for many have been saved who have grasped the essentials, or fundamentals, of the Christian faith." But after men have become Christians, it is indeed God's will that they read the Scriptures,

search the Scriptures, and judge according to the Scriptures, as is evident from the passages quoted above and as will be set forth more fully later.

The contention of the Papacy that the reading of Scripture cannot be permitted to all Christians because that would expose the "laymen" to the danger of interpreting Scripture according to their own thoughts and thus introducing false doctrine is beside the point, for experience has shown that it is, above all, the clergy and, *primus omnium*, the Pope who have interpreted the Scripture according to their own mind and filled the world with the most horrible heresies.

The Relation of the Original Text to the Translations

It is self-evident that the original wields canonical authority also over the translations. The vernacular versions have authority only in so far as they correctly render the original text. All translations must submit to the test whether they reproduce the original correctly. When the Church of the Pope declares the Vulgate to be absolutely authoritative, it commits an Antichristian outrage. However, the disparity between the original of Scripture and its translations must not be unduly stressed. Modern theologians engage in this erroneous and dangerous talk when they argue against the inspiration of Scripture along these lines: Even if Scripture were entirely God's Word, that would be of no benefit to the Church, since the Church, with the exception of a small minority of its members, can use the Scriptures only in translations, and the translations must be regarded as merely human views. With this argument Dr. Briggs sought to confuse the Presbyterian Board of Investigation at his trial. Also Henry E. Jacobs declared: "It is only the Scriptures as written in the original languages that are inspired. Even the best translation is only human explanation or interpretation of the inspired words, however well the inspired thought may be conveyed in other language." These words could convey the thought that Bible colporteurs could offer an English or German Bible to prospective customers not as being the Word of God, but merely as being the translator's understanding of the Word of God. Over against this view it must be maintained: Of course even the best translators of

the Bible are not inspired as were the infallible Apostles and Prophets, and for that reason their translations must remain under the control of the original text and in so far are *norma normata.* Our dogmaticians emphasized this over against Rome. On the other hand it must not be forgotten: Whatever is God's Word in Greek, is God's Word also in German and English if only the German or the English is a faithful translation of the Greek. We should here keep in mind the nature of the Holy Scriptures. The language of Holy Scripture is so simple, particularly in the *sedes doctrinae*, that every translation which at all deserves the name of a "translation" must reproduce the original. One who understands the New Testament Greek and commands the language into which he is translating must take particular pains if he is minded to produce a translation which does not reproduce the original text.

Place side by side the Greek text of John 3:16, the German, the English, and the Latin translation: will anyone say that the translations do not reproduce the original? that we cannot say of the translated passage that it is the Word of God? that we must say that it is merely "a human explanation or interpretation" of the inspired text? John 3:16: Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται, ἀλλ' ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον; "*Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt, dass er seinen eingebornen Sohn gab, auf dass alle, die an ihn glauben, nicht verloren werden, sondern das ewige Leben haben*"; "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; "*Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret, ut omnis qui credit in eum non pereat, sed habeat vitam aeternam*" (Vulgate). And - to meet an objection - it is not only John 3:16 which is so clear that the translator could not go astray, but, as the greatest theologians of all ages (Augustine, Luther, Chemnitz, Gerhard, and others) have pointed out, the whole Christian doctrine is revealed in Scripture passages that need no exegesis, but are an open book alike to the learned and the unlearned and can be so readily translated that the translator cannot go wrong unless he has made up his mind to depart from the original. We are confronted by the fact that there is not one among the common versions of the Bible

in which the Christian doctrine in all its parts is not plainly stated and the opposing errors are not rejected.

This holds true even of the Vulgate of the Roman Catholic Church. The "*ipsa conteret caput tuum*" of Gen. 3:15 is rejected through the correct translation of many passages which present Christ as the sole Savior from the guilt of sin and death, e.g., 1 Tim. 2:5-6: "*Unus enim Deus, unus et Mediator Dei et hominum, homo Christus Iesus, qui dedit redemptionem semetipsum pro omnibus*"; and Gal. 3:16: "*Abrahae dictae sunt promissiones et semini eius. Non dicit: 'Et seminibus,' quasi in multis, sed quasi in uno: 'Et semini tuo,' qui est Christus.*" Also justification alone by faith without the deeds of the Law is clearly taught in the Vulgate, e.g., Rom. 3:28: *Arbitramur enim iustificari hominem per fidem, sine operibus legis*; and Gal. 2:16: *Scientes autem, quod non iustificatur homo ex operibus legis, nisi per fidem Iesu Christi.* In its official Confession, the Tridentinum, the Roman Catholic Church, in several canons, anathematizes justification by faith without the deeds of the Law, but this curse is directed against the doctrine which is clearly taught in its own official Bible translation, the Vulgate. If one should agree, *disputandi causa*, to discuss the doctrines with the Papists on the basis of the Vulgate, he would still retain the weapon with which to vanquish the opponent.

The same thing applies to making the Authorized Version the basis of the dispute with the Reformed. Though the Reformed sects which follow in the footsteps of Zwingli and Calvin teach an immediate operation of the Holy Ghost, without and alongside the means of grace - "efficacious grace acts immediately" - their Bible nevertheless teaches the correct doctrine: Rom. 10:17: "So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"; 1 Pet. 1:23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever"; and Titus 3:5: "According to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration." Also the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper is clearly stated in the Authorized Version: Matt. 26:26-28: "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said: Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup and gave thanks

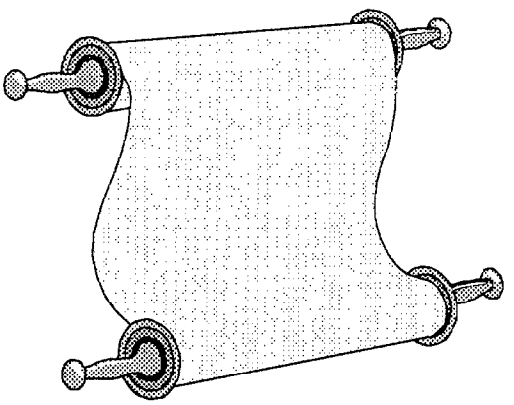
and gave it to them saying: Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The parallel texts of Mark, Luke, and Paul teach the same. The Reformed sects have separated from the Lutheran Church and are maintaining their separation by the rejection of doctrines taught unmistakably in their own Bible translation.

Thus Holy Scripture checks, so to speak, by its clear and simple mode of speech, false translations. It is by God's arrangement a light that no translation can extinguish easily. This confirms what Luther says of Holy Scripture: "There is no clearer book written on earth than Holy Scripture" (St. L. V:334). We should, then, not say that even the best translations are but a human view, or opinion, of God's Word. On the contrary, in so far as the translations are faithful translations - and exact translations are hard to avoid particularly in the *sedes doctrinae* - they are likewise the very Word of God. Walther therefore is right in saying: "One may be unacquainted with the original languages of the Bible and still be divinely assured that his German Bible is God's Word, for through it he receives the witness of the Holy Spirit." As Scripture in the original tongues proves itself to be God's Word, so also the translation - if it be a real translation - has the same power.

There is ample Scripture proof for the fact that translating does not deprive Scripture of its character of being the infallible Word of God. According to Scripture the infallible Word of the Apostles and Prophets will to the end of time, at all places, among all nations and tongues, be the foundation of faith for all Christians and the norm and standard according to which all Christians judge whether the doctrine is true or false. Since, however, the vast majority of Christians possess the written Word of the Apostles and Prophets only in translations, it is clear that Holy Scripture does not lose its character of being the infallible Word of God by being translated. God's protecting hand has guarded not only the original text, but also the translations. As we have a firm and fixed Word of God in the original despite the *variae lectiones*, so the current versions of the Bible present a firm and fixed Word of God, and this despite the fact that every existing translation

contains occasional mistakes and is subject to continuous correction in the light of the original.

The continuous demand for "revised" translations calls for two additional remarks. 1) As all theologians who deny the substitutional satisfaction of Christ and the inspiration of Scripture are according to God's order excluded from the teaching office of the Christian Church, so all such theologians should realize that they have no call to translate the Scriptures. 2) We shall always have to be content with versions which in the translation of difficult passages do not introduce false doctrines, but offer a translation which is "according to the analogy of faith" (what the analogy of faith, or *regula fidei* is, will be shown in the chapter "Holy Scripture and Exegesis"). In that case the translator may have had, as Luther says, the correct thoughts at the wrong place. Such translations will do no harm. They do not in any way militate against the clarity of Scripture, as has been shown in the chapter on "The Perspicuity of Scripture."



[Note: The next three articles are taken from Volume III of CHRISTIAN DOGMATICS, pages 422-427.]

3

Orthodox and Heterodox Churches

Congregations and church bodies must be divided into two classes according to their public doctrine.

It is God's will and command that in His Church His Word be preached and believed in purity and truth, without adulteration. In God's Church nobody should utter his own, but only God's Word (1 Pet. 4:11). Chaff and wheat do not belong together. All "teaching otherwise," ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν, is strictly forbidden. 1 Timothy 1:3: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." It is important to point out again and again that in all Scripture there is not a single text permitting a teacher to deviate from the Word of God or granting a child of God license to fraternize with a teacher who deviates from the Word of God. God is against the prophets who proclaim their own dreams (Jer. 23:31 f.). And all Christians without exception are commanded to avoid such (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 6:3 ff.).

The distinction between orthodox and heterodox church bodies and congregations is based on this divine order. A congregation or church body which abides by God's order, in which therefore God's Word is taught in its purity and the Sacraments administered according to the divine institution, is properly called an orthodox church (*ecclesia orthodoxa, pura*). But a congregation or church body which, in spite of the divine order, tolerates false doctrine in its midst is properly called a *heterodox church* (*ecclesia heterodoxa, impura*). All children of God should earnestly see how real and serious this difference is, because indifference as to the Christian doctrine is rampant today among professed Christians, and the "abrogation of creeds" and substitution for them of a so-called "applied Christianity" is represented as the goal the Church should strive for.

With regard to the orthodox character of a church body note well: (1) A church body is orthodox only if the true doctrine, as we have it in the Augsburg Confession and other Lutheran Symbols, is actually taught in its pulpits and its publications and not merely "officially" professed as its faith. Not the "official" doctrine, but the actual teaching determines the character of a church body, because Christ enjoins that all things whatsoever He has commanded His disciples should actually be taught and not merely acknowledged in an "official document" as the correct doctrine. It is patent that faith in Christ will be created and preserved through the pure Gospel only when that Gospel is really proclaimed. (2) A church body does not forfeit its orthodox character by reason of the casual intrusion of false doctrine. The thing which the Apostle Paul told the elders of Ephesus: "Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30), came true not only in the Apostolic Church, but also in the Church of the Reformation and will occur to the Last Day. A church body loses its orthodoxy only when it no longer applies Rom. 16:17, hence does not combat and eventually remove the false doctrine, but tolerates it without reproof and thus actually grants it equal right with the truth.

We call heterodox church bodies both "churches" and "sects," depending on whether we have in mind the good or the evil in them. Churches they are in so far as they still retain enough of the Gospel of Christ that men can come to faith in Christ and thus can become true children of God. Sects they are in so far as they have combined to further their deviations from the doctrine of Christ and thus cause divisions in the Church and by their errors and separate existence constantly threaten the faith of the children of God.

4

Children of God in Heterodox Churches

Though God desires that all congregations be orthodox, and though all heterodox communions exist only by God's sufferance and contrary to God's gracious will, still it is a fact that also in the heterodox communions there are believing children of God. The term "Christians" covers a wider field than the term "orthodox Christians." Though Christ denies to the Samaritan Church the right of existence as a separate church organization (John 4:22), still He repeatedly acknowledged individual Samaritans as true children of God (Luke 17:16 ff.; 10:33). Luther, too, never thought of making the orthodox Church, the Lutheran Church, coextensive with the *Una Sancta.* Vigorously as he fights against the Papacy and expressly declares it an institution of Satan, he nevertheless does not doubt that God has at all times under the Papacy preserved for Himself a Church, yes, the elite of the Christians. Again, earnestly as Luther fights against Carlstadt, Zwingli, and their collaborators for their deviation from God's Word, he nevertheless grants that there were also true children of God who, ignorant of the evil they were thus supporting, made common cause with these pseudo reformers (St. L. IX:44). Likewise our older Lutheran dogmaticians, "zealots for orthodoxy" though they were, nevertheless decidedly rejected identification of the *Una Sancta Ecclesia* with the orthodox Lutheran Church. The Fathers of the Missouri Synod declare it a calumny when the Lutheran Church is accused of identifying the Church of God with the Lutheran Church. They taught: If a person sincerely clings to the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith, if he believes that God is gracious to him because of Christ's *satisfactio vicaria,* he is a member of the Christian Church, no matter in which ecclesiastical camp he may be. By denying this truth one would overthrow the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith, the article of justification. Walther: According to Rom. 3:28 and Acts 4:12 "the unconditional and sole requirement for salvation is fellowship with Christ through faith. The maxim, 'Outside the Church there is no salvation,' 'He who has not the Church on earth for his mother has not God in heaven for his Father,' is true only in this sense, that

outside the invisible Church there is no salvation and no state of grace. It has only this meaning that 'there is no salvation outside of Christ'; for whoever is not in inward fellowship with the believers and saints is not in fellowship with Christ either. On the other hand, whoever is in fellowship with Christ is in fellowship also with all those in whom Christ dwells, that is, with the invisible Church. Accordingly, he who restricts salvation to fellowship with any visible Church therewith overthrows the article of justification of a poor sinner in the sight of God by faith alone in Jesus Christ." (*Walther and the Church*, p. 70.)

5

Church Fellowship with Heterodox Churches (Unionism) Is Prohibited by God

It is common knowledge that the presence of children of God in heterodox churches is urged to prove that it is right, even demanded by charity, to fellowship heterodox churches. This is the exact opposite of what Scripture teaches, for Scripture says, "Avoid them."

The argument of unionists is contrary even to *natural reason.* The old Lutheran teachers point to 2 Sam. 15:11 as an illustration. Just as the fact that two hundred citizens of Jerusalem in their ignorance joined Absalom did not give the rest of Israel the right to desert their king and join the rebels, nor even to connive at the rebellion, so the circumstance that some Christians, from ignorance and contrary to God's orders, follow false teachers does not give license to other Christians to do the same thing.

To say that love demands such a practice is a misuse of that word. Love of God and love of the brethren requires the opposite practice. He who loves Christ loves Christ's Word, and Christ commands us to avoid all who teach anything that is contrary to His Word. And whoever really loves the brethren refuses to participate in their erring and sinning, seeking rather to deliver them from error and sin.

Moreover, the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament state explicitly that God permits false teachers to arise in order that Christians may show their obedience by avoiding them, not in order that Christians may fraternize them (Deut. 13:3; 8:2; 1 Cor. 11:19). If Christians, against the divine prohibition, fellowship false teachers and tolerate false doctrines, they commit the sin which the Church calls "unionism," "syncretism."

As a matter of fact, this unionism divides the Church and gives rise to heterodox churches in Christendom. Had the Christians always obeyed the divine order to avoid those teaching another doctrine (ἑτεροδιδασκαλοῦντες), neither the Papacy nor other sects could have arisen. Where there are no buyers, there is no market. Of course, unionism avers that it aims at the removal of discord among Christians. But because the unity of the Christian Church consists in having one faith and one profession, unionism actually is a caricature, indeed, a mockery of Christian unity. Instead of healing the hurt, it makes it permanent.

In 1 Cor. 1:10 we have an exact definition of Christian unity: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing [ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες] and that there be no divisions among you." This is a demand for uniformity in speech (λέγειν) or in the profession of the Christian doctrine. Then the Apostle continues: "but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοΐ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ γνώμῃ. Here he clearly says that Christians are to use the same words also in the same sense. Agreement in words with disagreement in meaning is altogether contrary to the unity God calls for, and to seek such a "unity" ("we agree to disagree") is immoral, a trifling with sacred, divine things, which is unseemly for Christians.

The Christian Church can and should have patience with the erring and seek through instruction to remove the error. But never can or should the Church grant error equal right with the truth. If it does, it renounces the truth itself. It is the very nature of truth to antagonize error. Truth which no longer excludes error, but grants it domicile, is *eo ipso* resigning as truth. Pertinently Luther

remarks: "Whoever really regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true, right, and certain cannot remain in the same stall with such as teach or adhere to false doctrine" (St. L. XVII:1180). Unionism in principle abolishes the difference between truth and error, so that only through a "happy inconsistency" can the erring retain their hold on the essential truth. For this reason unionism is a grave threat to the Christian Church. A person is fortunate indeed if, ignoring the words of Scripture enjoining him to avoid those who teach another Gospel, he yet retains his faith in the words: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

As for the talk current in our day, even among so-called conservative theologians, that "various trends," that is, variations in doctrine and profession, are intended by God, one can merely say that it is shocking that within Christendom the testimony of Scripture should thus be contradicted.

[Note: The concern of orthodox Lutherans for purity of doctrine is further evidenced by the great treasury of hymns in our Lutheran Hymnal. The concern for purity of doctrine is certainly expressed in the following hymn.]

"Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide"

Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the eventide;
Nor let Thy Word, that heav'nly light,
For us be ever veiled in night.

In these last days of sore distress
Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness
That pure we keep, till life is spent,
Thy holy Word and Sacrament.

Lord Jesus help, Thy Church up-hold,
For we are sluggish, thoughtless, cold.
Oh, prosper well Thy Word of grace
And spread its truth in ev'ry place!

Oh, keep us in Thy Word, we pray;
The guile and rage of Satan stay!
Oh, may Thy mercy never cease!
Give concord, patience, courage, peace.

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

The haughty spirits, Lord, restrain
Who o'er Thy Church with might would reign
And always set forth something new,
Devised to change Thy doctrine true.

And since the cause and glory, Lord,
Are Thine, not ours, to us afford
Thy help and strength and constancy.
With all our heart we trust in Thee.

A trusty weapon is Thy Word,
Thy Church's buckler, shield, and sword.
Oh, let us in its power confide
That we may seek no other guide!

Oh, grant that in Thy holy Word
We here may live and die, dear Lord;
And when our journey endeth here,
Receive us into glory there. Amen.

TLH, #292

Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

Heading for Apocalypse? A new U.N. report says global warming is already under way - and the effects could be catastrophic. A draft report currently circulating on the Internet asserts that the global-temperature rise can now be blamed, at least in part, on human activity ... this report comes from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a respected U.N.-sponsored body made up of more than 1,500 leading climate experts from 60 nations ... Over the next century, says the IPCC report: >Sea levels could rise up to 3 ft., mostly because of melting glaciers and the expansion of water as it warms up ... >Winters could get warmer ... >Rainfall could increase overall ... >Temperature and rainfall patterns would shift in unpredictable ways ... These are all worst-case scenarios, and the report's authors acknowledge that plenty of uncertainties remain in their analysis ... To stave off global warming completely, Richard Lindzen, an atmospheric scientist at M.I.T., maintains, "you would have to reduce emissions to where they were in 1920." ... As economist Henry Jacoby of M.I.T.'s Sloan School of Management puts it, "If you said, 'Let's design a problem that human institutions can't deal with,' you couldn't find one better than global warming."

With all their educational background and the skillful calculations based on the knowledge they have acquired, such climate experts have forgotten that God is the Creator and Preserver of the world. He who brought forth all things out of nothing still directs the course of the whole realm of nature to show forth His glory and wisdom, His power and majesty.

After the Great Flood He established His covenant with Noah that "neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:11). And as a token of that covenant for perpetual generations He placed the rainbow in the sky. God also promised that "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). "God is not a man, that He should lie" (Num. 23:19). The seasons of the year, day and night, shall remain with us until the Lord's return when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matt. 24:30). It is not man who governs the universe but the Lord God "Who points the clouds their courses, Whom winds and waves obey" as we sing in that well-known hymn of Paul Gerhardt (Hymn 520). This truth was impressed upon the disciples on the storm-tossed waters of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus, God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16), "rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." The disciples "marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!" (Matt. 8:23-27). What comfort for us to know that He does and will continue to preserve and sustain all things by His almighty power for the welfare of those who are His dear children through faith in His beloved Son (Gal. 3:26)!

An earthquake may be the real fire and brimstone that did in the Biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, said to have been destroyed by God in retribution for sin. And Lot's wife? It's more likely she drowned than turned into a pillar of salt, according to Graham Harris and Anthony Beardow. The British geologists say they discovered the likely remains of the two Biblical cities - and evidence contradicting the Biblical legend of their destruction - near the Dead Sea ... The geologists wrote in December's Quarterly Journal of Engineering Geology that the area was probably destroyed after an earthquake liquefied the rocks and soil the cities were built on, toppling all the buildings. "The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were lost beneath the waters of the North Basin as a consequence," they said ... The geologists believe that Sodom and Gomorrah were located near the southeast corner of the North Basin because it was rich in both salt from the Dead Sea and bitumen, or asphalt, which was mined nearby ... Harris and Beardow theorize the bitumen ignited during the earthquake and the fire helped to destroy the cities. The earthquake and liquefaction of the vast area under the cities are also likely to have created a tidal wave in the Dead Sea, they said ... They speculate the tidal wave swept back across the Dead Sea, dumping a big block of salt on the newly formed beach. Lot's wife probably died fleeing, and when he got to the top of the mountain on safe ground and looked back, all he saw was a pillar of salt. "You have the distinct possibility of a personal tragedy having been elevated into legend," Harris said.

"Be not wise in your own conceits" warns the Apostle Paul (Rom. 12:16). One would think that had these "wiseacres" carefully read the Scriptural account of the Lord's great wrath against the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, that then they would have literally trembled to speak in such an arrogant and flippant manner. The Lord Jesus declares that "the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:29,30). But such is not the case with those who are so wise

in their own conceits! The degrees after their names and the honors bestowed by the unbelieving world mean nothing in God's sight. For "great men are not always wise" (Job 32:9). "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22). Those are truly wise who have humbled themselves in the sight of God, like the publican in the temple (Luke 18:13), and cast themselves upon His mercy revealed in Jesus, our Savior. Such have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ's glorious kingdom and are now the heirs of everlasting life (John 3:16). Since such have been made "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15), they now take their reason captive and submit it to that Word through which the Holy Spirit has made them believers. The Word of God becomes their greatest treasure. Their attitude is expressed in the words of the Psalmist, "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:103,104).

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