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The Doctrinal Presuppositions Of Christian Social Service

The following statement was formulated by a committee composed of Roy Enquist, Franklin D. Fry, William Laird, and William H. Lazareth, guided by faculty advisor, Prof. Martin J. Heincken, as part of the Service Project Report submitted by the Mount Airy Commission on Social Service to the Annual Conference of the Association of Lutheran Seminarians held at Gettysburg Seminary. Since the statement was

to be peculiarly Lutheran, much information including direct quotes, has been gratefully taken from declarations of principle and purpose of the Social Action and Social Missions Boards of the respective Lutheran bodies co-operating in the National Lutheran Council. The statement's organizational motifs, however, are the sole responsibility of the committee.

1. Creation for Community

Christian social action roots itself in the very heart of the Biblical Kerygma. It is an essential part of the Christian faith to which the Lutheran Church is committed both in spirit and in Confessional formulation, since it concerns itself with the basic relationship between man, his God and his fellow-men. Embracing, as it does, the dynamic of the Divinely-inaugurated agape, Christian social ethics provides the existential testing-grounds for the efficacious realization of the Biblical doctrines of man and God in the challenging world of everyday affairs.

Primary to the understanding of this relationship are the Biblical dualistic categories of the Creator and His created. The statement, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth" attests to the gulf which exists between finite man and the "totally Other" source of his being. Constant awareness of this dualism safeguards the conscientious Christian from both extremes of

ultra-"activism" or ultra "quietism." He knows that God's Kingdom will come on earth without him; indeed despite him. And yet he knows that he has been called by the Lord for constant loving service "even to these brethren." In this tension, he remains as a citizen of both Aeons, ever knowing that while his planning and concern is in accord with God's Will, his plan, per se, is not Divine.

When the Lord looked upon His creativity, "behold, it was very good." All things, including mankind, were brought into existence and still continue to exist by this creative grace of God in order to fulfill His Divine purpose in accordance with His sovereign will. Christianity, unlike Platonism, holds no disdain for the material, knowing that the whole of creation is the product of His goodness and will share in the Divine Consummation.

Crowning His creativity, God created the human race "in His own image and after His likeness, as the Father of a family of in-

carnate spiritual beings. This "imago Dei" certainly includes freedom and personal responsibility, intelligence, the faculty of moral and aesthetic judgment and the dominion over nature. Yet primarily, the essence of this concept is one of relationship; it refers not so much to human qualities or capabilities as to the capacity for loving fellowship and community with one's God and fellow men. This means that man cannot ultimately attain that full measure of felicity and abundance of life for which he was created until he acknowledges his essentially creaturely dependence upon his Author and seeks to fulfill the Divine purpose of his human existence; namely, to glorify God in loving fellowship with Him and His.

God creates the whole man, even as He creates the material world in which he lives. We who, through the Lord Jesus, are His children, may exclude no part of His creation from our interest or concern. That which injures or aids the body is important to us for precisely the same reason. In this sense, Christian social responsibility goes back to the first verse of Genesis.

Another phase of the doctrine of man which requires consideration because of its social import might be termed the "corporateness of man." In the Scriptures, man is not conceived in terms of modern individualism. He is always part of a community; always in relation to others. He never appears except as he is addressed in responsibility by God; the Hebrew nation under the Old Covenant and the Church under the New. It is involved in the concept "the kingdom of God." All men are "in Adam" and all may

be "in Christ." All believers are members of the "holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints," not by reason of choice, but by virtue of their new birth. Our theologians have sought to express this truth also in their teaching of the "orders of Creation," in which the family, the state and the economic order are understood as social necessities without which man cannot truly be man and within which he must live his life under God

There are two other ways in which God confronts us which have particular relevance to those social problems which arise in national and international life. As those who believe in the Universal Ruler, we cannot but read history as an account of His actions toward, for and in men. God's will is sovereign, but to all men is offered the choice of being either His instrument or His servant. Ultimately however, with our consent or without it, His purposes are achieved.

Hence God has given to mankind His Law to be obeyed and followed for the leading of the good life in fellowship. God's demands upon man are absolute and they are universal in nature since they "have been written into the hearts of all men." There is no partiality about God, and consequently, Nathan and Elijah reminded Kings that they were subject to the same moral standards as lesser men while Amos uttered Divine Judgments against Israel, insisting that it stood under similar condemnation with Damascus, Gaza, and Tyre for the sins of inhumanity.

But God's love for His human creation is so great that He imparts the power to exist with no limitation as to man's personal

freedom and responsibility over against his Maker. The human son may break the Law if he will, but in doing so, he destroys the Father-child relationship, as well. The community in love for which man was created demands the surrender of man to Him in Whom alone he can live in true humanity. It leaves him quite free to rebel and to assert his own lordship and thus destroy true community. It is as this whole being, as this center of responsibility, that man sins. It is not as if Sin were isolated in his fleshly members even though physical cravings often lead him into rebellion against God's will. Often temptation begins in the imagination, which then arouses the body to sinful rebellion, his proud self-assertion, his attempted denial of his creaturehood. Not some part of man, but the whole man has sinned and come short of the glory of God.

II. Reconciliation for Community

The church possesses no description of the domain of sin in man's personal and corporate life that is more incisive than the assertion of the Apostle that "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin...so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." Our whole understanding of sin is rooted in a recognition of mankind's essentially corporate nature. The whole race is in bondage to the tyranny of sin. Humanity is no casual assembly of individual units but an organic body bound together in a common thralldom to sin and death. This Biblical understanding of the social nature of man's sin does not exclude the intensely personal quality of sin. Each individual recapitulates in himself the

fall of Adam. Each man is created in the image of God and yet each man willfully revolts against the Lordship of God, and breaks His holy law. This personal and social aspect of the dominion of sin in human life must not only be admitted in the general structure of theology, but is an essential presupposition for the church in its evangelistic mission and in Christian social action.

In spite of the unfathomable depths of the penetration of sin into the whole fabric and nature of human life, all creation is still God's creation. God's purpose of love in creation for community cannot be frustrated even by the willful revolt of man against God. God has an answer to the rebellion of man, and this answer is nothing less than God's own act. God reveals Himself, and His word is an absolute judgment on the sin of man, and, at the same time, it is the redemption of man. The divine Word becomes a man in order to rescue man. As the first Adam was the representative of the whole race in the Fall, the second Adam (the Word Incarnate) is the first fruit of the reconciliation of the broken community. Tremendous implications for social action are to be recognized in the church's understanding of Christ as both the Divine Word of God, and, as the second Adam. The Divine nature of Christ manifests that the Incarnation is God's own plan for effecting the reconciliation of the human community. The human nature of Christ makes clear God's complete identification of Himself with man, and is the historical demonstration of what true human self-realization actually is.

God's answer to man's sin, then, is no superficial prescription. As

we have seen, nothing less than the God-man, Jesus Christ, is the subject in the act of re-creating the fellowship which man has broken. God Himself atones for the sin of man to make the individual and corporate body whole. The superhuman power of sin and death are broken—absolutely—by God Himself in an actual historical event. Sin and death and the devil cannot enslave the second Adam. He met their fury and overcame them through His obedient sufferings and death. God gloriously vindicated the final triumph over this demonic trinity through the Resurrection. Only the atonement deals in a realistic and thoroughgoing manner with the ponderous burden of guilt that lies heavily on every man. Man is a responsible being, accountable for his actions. And since man is responsible, he is also guilty, individually and corporately, for in the depths of his being he has blasphemed against God and has idolized himself. In the atonement the God-man not only conquered sin and death and the devil but covered man's guilt too. God's act of atonement sweeps away the crushing moraine of guilt that would obliterate man. The holy justice of God as well as His compassionate love are active in the atonement. Again we are to see both the personal and social aspect of the doctrine at hand. Guilt necessarily presupposes personal responsibility. Each man is personally guilty. But mankind is an organic unity, too. Man is responsible not only for himself but for Abel as well. Man is responsible for the sin of the society of which he is a member precisely because it is impossible to isolate the individual man from his social context without dehuman-

izing him. Similarly, Christ's victory over the hosts of darkness is a victory having deep significance for society and for the individual. Christ has already mortally wounded the powers that hold society in bondage, the powers that cause the whole creation to groan and travail in longing for redemption and reconciliation. The Christian knows that this same victory is certain for him too. Christ has conquered the individual's personal mortal enemy for him and in his stead.

The doctrine of the atonement has clear relevance to the church's present task of redemption. The church is not called to redeem society. The church announces, rather, that God Himself has already redeemed society in the historical incarnation and atonement of Christ. Society and the individual need not despair under the burden of guilt and suffering and sin. There is a way out; God Himself has provided the way. And, as the atonement is the revelation of God's law and gospel *par excellence*, the church possesses nothing to equal the message of the cross as a yardstick of judgment over the sin of society and as the way of redemption and forgiveness for society.

Sometimes the purpose of God's saving love in the act of the atonement has been understood by the church in such a way that the nature of God's love has been obscured. When the atonement is taken to have significance for only a portion of mankind, "the elect," for instance, God's unapproachable holiness and boundless love are radically distorted. The universality of God's concern is no less certain in the act of the atonement than it is in the act of creation. God would have all men be

saved. Christ did not die for the select few; Christ died and rose again to atone for the sins of all men.

When the atonement is taken to have significance only for those who are already within the household of faith, the foundation for the church's activity in social action and evangelism is hopelessly sabotaged. God's love is directed not only toward those who name His Name, but He is infinitely and eternally concerned with every individual human being who has ever appeared on the face of the earth. When the church expresses itself in evangelism and social action it expresses most clearly the loving concern of its Head for all mankind. Evangelism and social action are but the application of the Cross of Christ to all society. When the church ceases to so appropriate the power of the atonement, the church actually ceases to be the church.

Finally, it should be noted that the assertion of the universality of God's love in the atonement does not conflict with man's personal responsibility. Man can really choose to reject the grace of God and so refuse reconciliation. It is only in faith that the power of the atonement is received by man, but, as the Lutheran Church has ever insisted, faith itself is a gift of God. It is in this area of decision where man and society are confronted by God that the church must call men to faith through the power of the Word of God. It is this witness which is expressed in the several areas of the Christian social mission: evangelism, social action, social reconstruction, and works of serving love.

III Realization of Community

The community for which God created man and then redeemed

him through Jesus Christ is realized only through the work of the Holy Spirit. The response in faith by which man apprehends the free grace of God and claims it as the true son of God can never be seen as the result of man's own activity and/or ability. Rather, as Luther affirms, it is the Holy Spirit which "calls, enlightens, and sanctifies" man into the true acceptance of the Christian imperative. Only the Spirit of God can awaken the heart of man to his true sonship.

As the Lord and Giver of faith, the Spirit is ceaselessly active in the calling, enlightenment, and sanctification of the Christian. Unlike the Jew who can only look back upon his election and redemption and forward to the Day of the Lord, the Christian has the daily consolation and strength offered by the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was not only an act that happened once and for all; it is the daily experience of the new man in Christ. This daily renewal by the Spirit is not a renewal for its own sake. Rather it is a renewal for a purpose, for the purpose of love and fear of the Lord and love and service to one's fellow man. When directed toward one's fellow men this renewal expresses itself, both individually and corporately, in evangelism and works of serving love.

The corporate renewal of the Holy Spirit finds its substance and expression in the Church. The call of the Spirit is one to fellowship, not only with God, but also with all other believers. Luther says that the Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens the whole church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." The Church, as the Body of Christ, as the fellowship of the Redeemed, lives un-

der the same demands as does the individual Christian.

When a man has been called by the Spirit "that Christ may dwell in (his) heart by faith," he cries with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This transfer of the ownership of a man's life from self to Christ provides the key to the Christian's life. He becomes a Christ to his neighbor. As long as man does not realize that he is saved by grace alone, he will use his neighbors and even God Himself as means to the working out of salvation. He cannot, therefore, be concerned for them purely in love, for their sakes and not his own.

When however, Christ comes to dwell in the heart by faith, the whole situation is altered. Now the love of Christ which is pure concern for the neighbor's welfare flows through each believer and each believer no longer uses his neighbor as the tool to his own satisfaction, his own self-realization, but he helps him for his own sake. This is how the fellowship of the Redeemed is transformed into the fellowship of the Concerned. Its life becomes one of love and service to all men. As the part of mankind which has been called by the Spirit to claim the Redemption offered all men through Christ, the Church is alive to its mission of mercy and service to all mankind. The fellowship of the Redeemed expresses its concern by activity in the two fields of 1.) evangelism and 2.) works of serving love.

Evangelism, the full-time witness of new man in Christ for his God and Saviour and his work for the winning of others to them, is the primary task, both of the individual and of the Body of

Christ. This realization follows the Divine injunction: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all things shall be added unto you." Nothing in the Christian life takes precedence to the witness to the love of God in Christ. Primary allegiance belongs to the spiritual kingdom.

At the same time that the Christian affirms he is not of this world, he also is alive to the fact that he is definitely in this world. The call of the Christian is not to the selfish withdrawal which makes service to others impossible. Just as Christ entered this world for His service in love, so the Christian works to serve this world in love. Together with the responsibility of evangelism, he accepts the charge for works of serving love.

As an individual, this acceptance involves the complete consecration of a man's life to the divine imperatives. Thus, Luther stresses that "the faithful discharge of a man's vocation is a true divine service. This Biblical truth does not leave Christian service to the clergy but makes it a mandate for every man who would confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Many areas which elicit the Christian response of serving love are beyond the capacity of any one man. These must be served by the body of Christ, either as a whole or by sections of it. The fellowship of the concerned naturally works in co-operation.

The works of serving love include every possible type of situation in which a man is in need. This welfare to the needy is usually called Inner or Social Missions in the Lutheran Church.

The works of serving love also include the Church's task to be
(Continued on page 16)

American Lutheranism —

What Price Glory?

There is always present an all too familiar (and repulsive) air of unreality which borders on the sacrilegious, whenever rubber-gloved theological neophytes scientifically treat painful realities like struggle, sacrifice, and suffering in the sterilized test tube of a relatively harmless journal. But theology need not be harmless—especially if Christian.

Our contemporary inflation of words has made almost trite the shocking truth that there are fellow Christians in many parts of the world who are daily sacrificing for their faith and its practice, in a manner and to an extent unknown to humanity since the persecutions of the Roman Empire. Well-heated homes, well-filled stomachs, and comfortably bulging wallets make our sympathetic understanding of their plight all the more difficult, if not impossible.

One cannot help fearing that our church, in its American setting of security, respectability, and division of labor, is beginning to feel that perhaps serving two masters is not totally inconceivable, especially since the minimum demands of one can apparently be satisfied by an hour a week and a check a year. We are echoing the hedging of Augustine in trying to placate the absolute demands of discipleship with a pathetic, "Presently, O presently, let me be but a little while longer." How long will God wait before we are forced to pay the price of earthly glory?

Christ's greatest temptation was to substitute the crown of glory for the crown of thorns, the con-

quests of the Davidic King for the sacrifices of the Suffering Servant. So, too, His church. Evangelical Christianity has been abundantly blessed in the four centuries since it took upon itself the yoke of the servant in protest to the pretentiousness of its erring Roman brothers. Yet the subtle wiles of the Tempter intensify in direct proportion with the Progress of the Pilgrim.

Hence, our European Evangelical brothers became infatuated with the glories of the earthly Jerusalem during the past century, and threw themselves down from the pinnacle of the Temple only to be so broken in spirit and in limb as to approach death itself. And now with these gasps and chokings still vividly haunting our memories, we American Evangelicals are lustfully eyeing those very same temple stairs, stimulated by the enticing lure of the Antichrist, who has let us begin to taste of the irresistible nectar of all would-be gods: the intoxicating wines of earthly power, popularity, and respectability. These are beverages in which American Lutheran bodies—including the most Pietistic—are now beginning to indulge. The aim of this paper is to plead for some responsible "Temporal Temperance" beginning with tomorrow's clergy.

What can we learn from the pattern of recent European Evangelical theological and ecclesiastical trends? Taking Germany as the classical example, we see our churches passing through two very distinctive periods, and now embarking upon an uncertain

third. If early modern German music can be classified around the peaks of Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven, late modern German theology can do roughly the same with Bismarck, Barth, and Bultmann.

The label "Bismarck" in this context symbolizes those expansive years from the middle of the nineteenth century down to World War I by which time the saving faith of the Reformers had degenerated into a "Kulturprotestantismus." In an age permeated with the optimistic belief in the unending possibilities of human progress and discovery, the theology of Ritschl had religion emerge as a product of the human struggle for existence. In his own words, "Religion is the instrument man possesses to free himself from the natural conditions of life."

The unique Christian message became equated with human civilization in general; the God of Abraham and Isaac was relegated the role of a handy prop for ethical aspiration. The insinuation that God's function was merely to stand surety for the attainment of human purposes, even though they might be moral, laid the foundation for an era of theological thinking which could end only in a this-world religion: a "social gospel." The Kingdom of God became a sociological goal aiming at the moral unification of the human race through action prompted by universal love to our neighbor, rather than an eschatological aeon. In different ways and to different extents, the great thinkers Harnack, Herrmann, and Troeltsch became devotees of this Liberal School, and by 1890 they had come to exert the most preponderant influence in the whole

Evangelical theological world. Secularized Protestantism, much to the often sincere delight of rulers from Frederick William IV through Bismarck, became the "respectabilized," and consequently recognized, moral force sanctioning and supporting the Prussian aristocracy.

If the years 1850-1914 can be characterized in terms of worldly acceptance and expansion of influence, the pendulum swung to a concerted purging and inner concentration in post-World War I thought. With the 1919 publication of Barth's "Romans", a new era began and a new theological giant came to the fore. Surrounding himself with kindred spirits like Brunner, Gogarten, Turneyesen and Schmidt, Barth developed a "Theology of Crisis" which was based upon Reformation doctrine with insights from Kierkegaard, and Kutter. Issuing a "marginal corrective" to all theology, Barth's school protested against the self-complacency of theology and the church, confronting them with the Word of God as the manifestation of the "Wholly Other One," by means of which everything man-made was questioned.

With a series of mighty blows, the Barthians exposed and refuted all of the contemporary theology which aimed at satisfying human intelligence—its religious, moral, and even aesthetic assumptions—and re-directed it to understanding, obeying, and proclaiming its unique treasure, the ministerium verbi divini. Dogmatic and ethics became one in obedience to the Word of God which speaks in a man's heart to disclose to him his duty for the actual or existential moment through which he is living. This, then, is what dependence on God means, rather

than ethical programs or assorted moral precepts, or even meticulous effort to imitate Jesus.

As Barth grew more orthodoxly Calvinistic in the late 1920's, theological divergencies developed within the School, particularly with Gogarten and Brunner. Although other major issues were also involved, the issue of ethics was basic to the respective breaks, and World War II was met with different, if not confusing, systems and views. Many Lutherans especially, found it impossible to accept Barth's monism of Law and Gospel in which "the Law is nothing else than the necessary form of the Gospel, whose content is grace." The shattering of Evangelical ranks following the split of the Triumvirate is most tragically reflected in the Bekennende Kirche—Landeskirche Nazi Resistance crisis. Only the overpowering presence of a common enemy made some semblance of unified aims and action possible.

Barth's "Wholly Other" God proved to be the Confessing Church's strongest symbol in opposing the absolute demands of the would-be god of the Nazi State. This continued emphasis made it difficult for Barth's followers to maintain the necessary tension between the "Deus absconditus and the "Deus revelatus." War-torn Germany yearned for Luther's "Father" and not Calvin's "Majesty." The early post-war crowded churches awaited a vital new message applicable to their particular needs and their particular situation—and the church, in the main, failed them. It helped to drive many to their knees in guilt confessions and repentance, but in awaiting God's will for their future lives, they experienced only silence.

At Amsterdam, in 1948, Barth insisted that the church is not our care; we must but commit it to the Lord. The care of the world is also not entrusted to us; our efforts must be directed toward the destruction of the spiritual pride aiming at the issuance of a Christian Marshall Plan. Christ, through his Cross, has already robbed the Devil, sin, and hell of its power. Niebuhr countered by characterizing this as "realized eschatology," which, when distorted by overemphasis, robs the Christian of his sense of moral responsibility. "In so stressing that we are men and not God, we are in the danger of offering a crown without a cross, a triumph without a battle, a faith which has annulled rather than transmuted the perplexities of life." This refutation, along with Barth's admonition for the Christian "to remain calm and maintain his sense of humor" in the face of the threat from the East, has made Barthian ethics extremely suspect in many quarters. One cannot underestimate the tragic disappointment of the many pastors who followed the courageous generalship of the Swiss master in the Nazi struggle and are now theologically leaderless as they face much the same enemy in a period of less than a decade.

Church organization was crippled because of the devastation of physical destruction, the loss of many hundreds of pastors either by physical death or by political compromise, and the shambles of a State-related, if not dependent, system of a bygone day. Furthermore, as we have seen, theology had gone through alternating periods of compromise and concentration, but rarely application. The man in the street was not

confronted by the unintelligible semantics of the theological ivory towers.

To correct this, most German theologians made the consecrated, though perhaps typical, decision that they had better spend all the more time in the towers to sift out the pure New Testament "kerygma", rather than to waste any more time in the all-too-unknown and distrusted streets of the masses. Consequently, the present rage in Germany is the Historical School of Form Criticism of Rudolf Bultmann which aims at the de-mythologization of the New Testament; i.e. exegetically, to take the N. T. sayings, limited as they are by their historical contexts and ancient world-view, and so to interpret them that modern man, with his strictly causally determined world-view will be confronted by the decision of faith.

Critics maintain that it is impossible to distinguish form from content in the Gospels, and that so rigorous an attempt places human intellect as final arbiter over the Scriptures rather than having even reason itself edified through the power of the Holy Spirit. Especially as reformulated in the thought categories of Heidegger, Bultmann's religion has been described as a theology of the cross, robbed of all empirical support, in which the hiddenness of God makes questionable, if not meaningless, even the Easter message. Jesus' ultimate significance lies in the fact that he is God's eschatological representative; little more can be said of him, once the "clouding preconceptions" of the writers have been eliminated.

Whereas traditional Christianity would have us believe in Jesus Christ, and Liberal Theology would believe that the historical

Jesus did such and such, Bultmann would have us existentially believe *as Jesus* believed, for ultimately Jesus' authority is his tangible exhibition of conditionless obedience and oneness with the Will of God. He maintains that since infinite man is limited by the bounds of history, we can know nothing about Jesus after his death on the cross. If the human life of the Son of Man cannot elicit faith from us, then no theory about this life can do so either. With the ascertainability of objective fact or historical incident so questionable in the Gospel accounts, it is imperative that modern man reject both historical and idealistic approaches to the Bible, and substitute a vital faith like that of the undefinable kerygmaticized Jesus for our present faith in the Platonic, Judaistic, and Gnostic theories about Him.

It is on this stage that all current theological discussion takes place. Whether in passionate agreement or in violent opposition, no one can escape the question as Bultmann has posed it. However noble the proposed theological task may be, however, the churches remain empty, while exegesis reigns over ethics, paper over people, science over service.

Fortunately, there is also a lively dissenting minority movement which believes that the aforementioned eras of social expansion and the logical concentration should be followed by a dynamic period of flesh and blood confrontation along with, rather than a totally exclusive commitment to, further exegetical concentration. Leading this wing are men like Thieliicke and Müller and a host of younger clergymen who began to experience Christianity first in battle-lines and air-

raid shelters rather than in the more sheltered Hebrew classes at the age of fourteen.

They represent the first theological generation which has come to grips experientially with the prophetic truths of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. They are also the inheritors of the best of the Theology of Crisis; indeed Brunner, and especially Gogarten, are still leaders in their ranks. They are men whose souls were torn asunder in the dilemma of having to witness to Christ in the termini technici of sterile theological formulations, tragically foreign to the needs of the suffering and the hungry. The traditional, parallel realms of theology and life seemed hermetically sealed from one another, and yet ethical neutrality was a conscientious impossibility. The crying need was for a Theology of Confrontation; the Gospel message relevant to modern man in his modern world.

The first challenge was to meet man where he was—on his level, in his language, on his terms. A dynamic conception of the Gospel was developed. The Bible is God's Word insofar as, in His act of constantly confronting men through it, the Bible becomes His Word. Its latent being lies in its dynamic becoming. Thus the Word is always the Word-that-is-proclaimed. The kerygma cannot be found in an exegetical vacuum; it is always an addressed-encounter, incomplete without its personal addressee. Moreover, it is always addressed to this particular person in a particular situation; Christ speaks eternally only insofar as the sociologically specific is ever-repetitive. Hence the church must follow the example of the Good Shepherd rather than that of the Grand Inquisitor. It must

respect the very core of the flock's being, namely, its responsible freedom, and continually go out after the individual sheep wherever and whenever it is lost.

The more systematic dualism of theology and life is consequently radically modified into a bi-polar ellipse, which begins with the needs of man-in-society and points beyond to a more profound understanding of the nature of man through existential anthropology and, ultimately, Biblical theology, which in turn re-infuses current life through a Christocentric Gospel with its correlating social ethic. Christian truth is perceptible as the constantly renewed and living result of life and death struggle conducted on its borders or peripheries with a specific, opposing teaching, philosophy, or way of life. It is always truth-in-relation-to or truth-in-opposition-to some aspect of life or thought. Unrelated truth has no frame of reference and remains meaningless to the truth-seeker. Christian truth is always saving truth, and therefore must be a relational truth-for-me. Hence the concept, "the living Word," is ultimately redundant: if it is not living, it is not the Word in the sense of the saving-Word-for-me.

In this way man is kept in the tension of his Biblical "hyphenated existence", saving him from succumbing to the current equally secular substitutes of either rugged individualism or mass man. This means that man is always a "mit-Mensch" (with-man) center of responsibility in community with God or another person whether he be on his knees in prayer, in a family, or a trade union, society, state, or church. Personal meaningfulness is insured in the stark reality of the di-

vine-human personal encounter or the subsequent, if not simultaneous, I-thou human confrontation. Indeed, God never enters into personal relationship with a man apart from other human persons. History is thus seen as the sphere of persons in relationship, in which each man, by virtue of his very being, posits inescapable claims upon every neighbor he confronts, just as claims are constantly being made upon him. In the self-recognition of his basic creatureliness the Christian perceives the pattern, as well as the limitations, of his ultimate self-realization. As the "already/not yet" new man in Christ, he suffers under the conflicting demands and claims continually placed upon him. Yet as one whose ethics is grounded upon a personal commitment to a living Lord, he knows of no legalistic "conflicting set of duties" and makes responsible decisions in love and good conscience.

It is with this understanding of Truth, Man and Life that the modern German is being confronted by the Lutheran existentialists. In a climate where virtually all codes, institutions, and social structures, including the organized church have been radically shattered, existential faith has little human to lean on following the nineteenth century inroads of History, Idealism, Higher Criticism, Relativism, and now, Hermeneutics. Fine, the existentialists cry, for now faith can be faith, dependent upon nothing but absolute trust in God's loving grace: His Word and His Sacraments. It took the hell of today's war-torn Europe to have men come to appreciate the existential profundity of Luther's faith of the "Resignatio ad absurdum." The final test of faith is the trembling "Den-

noch", (nevertheless) rather than the self-confident "Deshalb weil", (for that reason) even if it be whispered from the lair of the Antichrist himself. It is for the saving of these whispers, and not Western Civilization, that we proclaim Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

Most German churches are still poorly attended, but society is being infused with a religious spirit as these men step out of their pulpits into the streets. Not all who are "respectable" dare take the step, and those who do so aim at winning small cell groups of consecrated followers. "Where two or three are gathered in My Name," is the norm and the aim. The Evangelical Academies, the lay orders, the lay preachers, the pastor-workers, the factory chaplains, the mothers' rehabilitation services, the railroad missions, the refugee camp itinerants, the voluntary celibates, the Kirchentag and the liturgical Michael's fellowship are all areas of vital pioneer activity which are winning men-of-life to faith-in-life. It is still too early to say yet whether the German Church is being reborn; we can only trust in Christ's promise that more and more shall be added unto him who witnesses and testifies in an hour of need.

What should this survey mean for other Lutherans—primarily us Americans, though Sweden would probably profit by lending an ear. Succinctly stated, we face the choice between respectability in men's eyes or respectfulness in God's eyes. Our church has been blessed in recent decades with growth, power and leadership. With these assets, we have been privileged to serve many of the Lord's needy. Yet let us not for-

get that it has been with our own with whom we have been primarily concerned, be it following our Scandinavian and German emigrations and migrations domestically, or supporting our suffering brothers in the faith in foreign aid. This was right and good and as it should have been.

Now that we are organizationally coming of age, however, we must stride forward proportionately in theological and ethical and missionary leadership, so that organization, per se, does not become an end in itself. Lutheran unity is a worthy and long-overdue goal; but it is not worth any cost. An existential witness to men-in-society in acts of serving love undeniably has valid trans-confessional implications, for too often it is the scandal of our own disunity which is our most insurmountable obstacle.

Ultimately, Lutheran unity, along with Lutheran theology, will be indirectly best served when we lose ourselves in winning and serving others. The respectable middle-class will hold no monopoly in the hereafter; nor should they be the sole concern of our ministry. God forbid that we should need the physical disasters of Europe to make us sensitive to the common human crisis of which we are all a part. Make no mistake about it, however, that some form of suffering witness will also be demanded of us in our lifetime, be it directed against the forces of the Kremlin, the Vatican, or some other center of worldly temptation. And if the lesson of Germany tells us anything, it is the need for a consecrated church witnessing to the theological truths which it professes. Theology and ethics—the Word and suffering, are the only weapons the Church

has. Artificial, Gothic-covered bowling alleys with plush-furnished facilities also provided for chance worship will prove to be a hideously distorted and incongruous Body for its Divine Head: the suffering servant of all humanity.

Few conscientious scholars could deny that our Lutheran churches have been particularly susceptible to the traditional critique levelled against it that Lutheranism has been far too inward and individualistic to help in modern society. Factors contributing to this deplorable situation include: 1) respectable tie-up with conservative states, 2) anti-liberal Pietistic inwardness, 3) polemical distortion of the "alone" of the justification by faith doctrine, at the expense of the fruits of faith, 4) Augustana VII's too narrow conception of the church, at the expense of the whole idea of the Kingdom, and 5) Melancthon's "Reine Lehre" (Pure Doctrine) norm stifling the missionary and evangelistic spirit in the decisive age of Orthodoxy.

But this belongs to the dark and cloudy past. "False Christians that boast of the Gospel and yet bring forth no good fruits are like the clouds without rain, wherewith the whole element is overshadowed, gloomy and dark, and yet no rain falls to fructify the ground. Even so, many Christians affect great sanctity and holiness, but they have neither faith, nor love towards God, nor love towards their neighbor." For the respectable die-hards who detect "American activism" or the "Social Gospel" or "Salvation by works" in this quote, it should be recorded that it was spoken about two centuries before Protestants walked the ground of America, (Continued on page 16)

Is It Worth It?

Some of us have been here but a few short months, others for a little over a year, and still others a bit over two years. But regardless of what category each individual here finds himself, he must eventually come face to face with this question: "Is this ministry toward which I am striving really worth it?"

Let's first of all try to answer this question as though this were like any other profession—doctor, engineer, scientist. How about first of all, monetary remuneration? Have some of us come into the Seminary with the idea that the ministry offers opportunities to make a fair salary which coupled with a free place to live along with some of the free gifts we sometimes hear about will add up to a pretty fair salary. If so, forget it and go into some other endeavor because cold hard statistical facts prove that the ministry is far below average when it comes to remuneration. Far better to become a lawyer, or doctor, for the reward of their labors in terms of money is far, far greater.

Now—is it worth it in terms of the number of hours worked? Some of us have the idea that since the pastor is his own boss and can therefore set his own hours and days of work, he has a big advantage over plenty of other professions. If that is your conception, forget the ministry, for the truly consecrated pastor is on call twenty-four hours of the day, seven days of the week, fifty-two weeks of the year. The amount of work to be done in furtherance of God's kingdom on earth is never ending and for those who truly labor that "His kingdom

come, His will be done" can never rest in this life.

Now—is it worth it in terms of security? Some of us doubtless have the idea that there is a tremendous scarcity of ministers, that there will always be room for as many men as become ministers and that this demand for pastors doesn't take into account old age, that ministers are always taken care of when they become too old to produce satisfactorily. If these are your ideas, leave now, for you will be rudely awakened shortly. True, there is a shortage of pastors, but the need is for consecrated men, men who are devoted to the cause of Our Lord, and the man that thinks that because he has been ordained that is his insurance of continual employment will face the facts all too soon. Security?—you will never know when you may have to stand by what is right in the face of opposition from your church members, and suddenly find that your services are no longer required. And when you become too old, nobody is going to be overly sympathetic to you, because you have had the same chances as they (so they think, at least) to provide for that day when you will be retired.

And so it goes—we could cite chance for advancement, social prestige, material possessions, and a host of others and ask "Will I get the same amounts of these out of the ministry as I would in any other field of endeavor? And each time you must face the answer—NO!

But if you are ready to work twenty-four hours a day for a relative pittance, under constant pressure, never knowing from one

day to the next when your services will no longer be required, and if you love the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and stand ready to do His will in every thought, word, and deed, if you have felt the call of God to give your whole life to Him regardless of what may seem the cost in terms of the values of this

world, then the answer to the question, "Is it worth it?" is—yes, IT IS PRICELESS. May God be praised that He has chosen us to minister to His people, and may we humbly beseech Him that He give us the faith and the love and the ability to do His will upon earth.

Richard H. Porritt

(Continued from page 7)

the conscience for bettering society. This task is usually called Christian Social Action. It includes all that the Church, functioning as a whole and as separate congregations, does to call attention to and to remedy all social evils which are disruptive of personality and community. The Church must sit in judgment on all forms of community, the family, the state, the economic order, the cultural orders, wherever they violate God's order. It must also point the way to a constructive solution. This is true of the local community where a roadhouse may be a menace all the way up to the community of the nations, where some policy may be disastrous to community. Social action is the voice and hand of the Church in applying the law and the gospel to all forms of community.

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about four centuries before the birth, to say nothing of the death of Walter Rauschenbusch, by a fairly decent Christian who fortunately died before the rigid entrance requirements were standardized by Lutheran Orthodoxy, since some of his heretical beliefs, like considering the Book of James and its message "an epistle of straw," would obviously have blackballed him!

Faith in our faith in Christ or belief in our belief in the Confessions is a far cry from loving and serving our neighbors as Christ loved and served us. Ours is the challenge—but it is the challenge of the shame of the cross; for only he who shares in its shame can ever hope to share in its glory.

William H. Lazareth

Contributors to this Issue

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