

SELECTIONS FROM

"SHALL  
THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION  
REALLY BE CONTINUED"

("Skal Den Lutherske Reformation Virkelig Fortsaettes")

by:

Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872)

First published in the

"Monthly Review for Christianity and History"  
("Maanedsskrift for Christendom og Historie")

Copenhagen, Denmark, A.D. 1830



## INTRODUCTION

During the last few years, three books have appeared in America dealing with the life and work of a great Lutheran churchman of the past century, Bishop Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872).

1. A translation of Professor Hal Koch's biography of Grundtvig by Llewellyn Jones. (1952)
2. "H.F.S. Grundtvig: An American Study" by Dr. Ernest Nielsen (1955)
3. "Danish Rebel: The Life of H.F.S. Grundtvig" by Dr. Johannes Knudsen (1955)

In a series of articles in Lutheran Tidings last fall, the undersigned suggested that it was now high time that translations of or at least excerpts from Grundtvig's major writings now be made available.

Soon after, I learned that a considerable amount of work on this had already been done by the Ordinator of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, Rev. Valdemar S. Jensen.

This series of excerpts from that writing in which Grundtvig's views were first set forth in comprehensive form, "Skal Den Lutherske Reformation Virkelig Fortsættes" (1830), has been made from Pastor Jensen's translation of the entire work.

It is presented as a dependable synopsis of the viewpoint set forth in this work and is issued as a kind of "sample" and "advertisement" in the hope that interest will be awakened in some quarters in the rather unique contribution from within the Lutheran tradition made by this great personality in the life of the Lutheran Church in Denmark during the past century.

The work is divided into three sections with an introduction. The first section is of rather general introductory nature, the second is concerned mainly with the problems of the relationship between Church and State in Lutheran Europe. The principal part of the work, which sums up and most clearly expresses the point of view involved, is the third section dealing with the Lutheran Reformation in terms of the Church's relationship to theology, which Grundtvig calls the "school". It is from this section that the excerpts are taken following the order of the text as printed in Volume 5 of Bagtrup's edition of Grundtvig's works, pages 318-354 inclusive.

Since the three books mentioned above will provide all the necessary historical information and background material, only a few remarks will be made here.

The title will no doubt strike the reader as peculiar: "Shall the Lutheran Reformation Really be Continued?" Why the "really"?

The answer is that this work is not only a positive exposition of a new and rather unique viewpoint within Lutheranism but is also an attack on the Rationalist party at that time holding a dominant position in the Danish State Church. For some time, leading members of this party had been maintaining that the Lutheran Reformation must be corrected, continued and completed, according to their own ideas, of course. Grundtvig had come to agree with them on this one point, but naturally his ideas on the same subject were quite different from the program contemplated by the Rationalist party. This is why the adverb "really" forms part of the title. It is Grundtvig's answer to the Rationalists showing how the Lutheran Reformation is to be continued in the right way as opposed to their blueprint.

The reader will not proceed very far before he discovers that Grundtvig regards the Apostle's Creed as being of apostolic origin,



and some passages may even hint at the presence of the idea, later definitely expressed by him, that the Baptismal Symbol was delivered to the apostles by the Lord Himself during the 40 days after His resurrection.

It will merely be remarked here, that whatever the reader may think of this belief, that there is a bit more to the matter than believing without proof the Protestant legend, repeated in one church history and theological manual after the other, without any seeming regard to the writings of the early church fathers, especially Irenaeus and Tertullian, that the various baptismal confessions of the ancient Church were derived from the New Testament Scriptures. This is a question which merits serious study. It can not be merely brushed aside and ignored and the evidence against what is commonly supposed to be a fact, carelessly disregarded.

It will be noticed that Grundtvig is placing Tradition above Scripture, a rather revolutionary about face coming from a Lutheran source.

But it will be noticed also that what Grundtvig means by Tradition is not the same thing as that which Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, or even Old Catholicism or Anglo Catholicism understand it to be. It has nothing to do with the doctrinal decisions of "the seven oecumenical councils of the undivided Church" (which, it may be remarked in passing was already well divided as a result of the Nestorian and Monophysite schisms) nor even "the witness of the first five centuries." It is instead what in Latin terminology is called the "Traditio Dominica", that is, the tradition stemming from the Lord Himself.

Finally, a few words concerning the translation itself:

1. When Grundtvig speaks of the Church in the New Testament sense of the word, he usually, but not always, uses the word Menighed or sometimes, Samfund, rather than Kirke. These words are usually rendered as "Christian Community" or merely "Community". When he uses the word Kirke, it often, but not always, means church in the sense of an official establishment.
2. Grundtvig often uses the term Skole (School) for Theology. This has usually been translated: theology.
3. He often calls theologians Skriftkloge (scribes) sometimes in a favorable sense, most often as an unfavorable allusion, especially when he is speaking about theologians of the Rationalist party. This word has usually been translated as theologian.
4. The reader will notice that the Baptismal Symbol in several places is called the "Fundamental Law" of the Church. This is a translation of the word Grundlov. This word could also be translated as "Constitution" and is so translated in one or two instances. Grundlov means the fundamental law of the land as distinguished from various specific and local ordinances. In English usage it would mean, for example, the Constitution of the United States, as distinguished from all the other federal, state and local statutes.

The reader will no doubt soon realize that the viewpoint expressed is as unique in its way as a contribution from within the Lutheran tradition as that set forth by Grundtvig's now world famous contemporary, Søren Kierkegaard and, no matter how different, has certain affinities to the revival of Lutheran Orthodoxy, known as Confessionalism, which began with the appearance of Klaus Harns' 95 new theses on the 400th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, 1817, and was also a counter attack on the then almost victorious Rationalist party.



I add here a few sentences taken from Professor Hal Koch's Kirkehistorie (Copenhagen, 1944) pages 254-55, which I believe is about the best and shortest summary that can be found of what follows and what the whole thing involves:

"The Reformation came to the northern countries from Germany, and since that time, the churches here in the North followed the footsteps of the Germans faithfully without any great degree of independence. With the words: "Orthodoxy, Pietism, and the Enlightenment, one has drawn the main outlines of the path of religious development here in the North also. Only with the 19th century does a definite movement towards independence appear, which naturally stands in close relationship to the awakening of the national spirit. There is no room here to give details. It is only necessary to mention the name of Grundtvig. As mentioned previously, he is one of the few during the 19th century who has really pointed the way to new insights.

Deeply rooted in the Reformation's understanding of the Gospel, he has, like few others, understood the nature of the Church, that its secret is this, that our Lord Jesus in His Word is Himself present in the Christian congregation and there deals with the individual. The decisive element here is not the individual's feelings, experiences or thoughts, but God's action. Therefore everything centers on Baptism as the entrance to God's Kingdom, and Communion, where Christ in His Word takes dominion over the individual and nourishes the Christian life within him. Therefore, the Church does not stand on the Bible but the other way around, for it is the Church which has created the Bible. The sure foundation is not the Book but the living Word, the Lord's own Word in the Church. The Bible is the source of Christian enlightenment, but the Christian life itself is not derived from it."



## II. THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION. IN REGARDS TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THEOLOGY.

Luther's Catechism is indeed the most valid testimony that could be given as proof that he himself held fast to the original Christian Faith and that he wanted the Christian Community to stand by it unflinchingly.

Nevertheless it is a fact that even Luther and Melancthon, not to mention the other Reformers, leaned strongly toward the conception that the Christian Confession of Faith stood in a derivative relationship to the Scriptures. It was therefore their Christian intuition far more than their theological insight that guided them when they strenuously resisted all those who would deduce a new Christianity from Scripture or, what amounts to the same thing, alter the Faith according to their own understanding of Scripture.

Already the apostles Peter and Paul in their letters point to heretical attempts, by misuse of Scripture, to make the Christians uncertain as to the Faith which was delivered to them. And when we read the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian against the heretics, we see clearly that the apostolic Church rejected all these new master builders by pointing to the Confession of Faith at baptism and the whole apostolic preaching which was then fresh in the memory of the Communities in Ephesus, Rome and in all other places where the apostles had taught and established the Church.

It was however natural that the bishops at the apostolic sees would not permit any departure from the well known apostolic teaching in general. For this reason they did not sharply distinguish the unshakable foundation at Baptism and Communion laid down by the Lord Himself while he was visibly present from what his fully accredited messengers, the apostles, enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit had built upon that foundation. In this lay the root of the confusion that followed. For although every bishop did indeed strive to build in the manner of the apostles, it would still be inevitable, as the apostle Paul remarks, that some among those who built on the right foundation would build with wood, hay and stubble, which cannot endure the fire. Then, when dissensions arose, either in controversies with the heretics or among the bishops themselves concerning the genuine apostolic teaching and the relationship to it of certain later developments, then of course they appealed to the apostolic writings as being the most reliable testimony to what the apostles had really taught and what could or could not be made to agree with these teachings.

In this way there arose in the course of time a dangerous false relationship between the Church and the School, i.e., between the Faith and theology, between the Word of Faith and scripture interpretation. But what really caused the disaster was the meddling of the temporal power in the affairs of the Church and the overwhelming influence of the Alexandrian theology on Christian thought.

With the Nicene Council under Constantine the Great began a series of ecclesiastical parliaments which from beginning to end proved to be a brilliant arena for politics and for educated sycophants but a great misfortune both for the Church, the State, and even for Theology which has had to pay dearly for the vain glory it won there for the time being.



When an ecclesiastical council decides to issue an authoritative doctrinal statement for the Christian Community either in addition to the unalterable Word in the Church or as a more specific development of it, then naturally the Bible will be consulted. This was what happened at Nicea. And since the Book, as we know, can not speak for itself, then of course, it will be the learned who are to set forth its meaning and judgment. But then we find that the learned never can quite agree on the meaning of a book so rich in content, let alone what in the book is the clearest and most important. And this is exactly what they should be fully agreed on in order to be able, in accordance with the Book, to prescribe anything as having universal authority in addition to what is set forth in the Church Word.

It is sheer nonsense to deny that there has existed from the very beginning in the Christian Church a teaching profession with different gradations, set aside for the office by special consecration. For the Lord himself consecrated twelve apostles and seventy disciples. Only by the most far fetched interpretations of the epistles of Peter and Paul and by groundless assertions against the clearest testimonies of the church fathers will anyone be able to deny that the office of bishop is an apostolic institution. It is therefore self evident that the bishops, as long as they allowed themselves to be governed by the unalterable Faith of the Church, had the right to preach and to interpret the Scriptures on their own responsibility as they saw best.

What bishops and presbyters did not have the right to do was to impose new articles of faith on the Church, much less virtually to exclude all believing laymen from the Church by calling themselves the spiritual estate, a name which properly belongs to the entire communion of saints, and thereby represent themselves as the Church to which the laity, as the worldly and carnal element could not properly belong but merely in some way or other outwardly adhere.... as if Christendom was to be a new Rome where the patrician ecclesiasts as augurs should rule and discipline the Christian Community as if it were a crowd of plebeians.

It has often enough been pointed out that the revival of the sciences, the transplanting of Greek book learning to Italy after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks and the invention of printing prepared the way for the Lutheran Reformation. Nevertheless, it has generally been overlooked that the errors of the Reformers on the question of the relationship between the Church and theology was also caused mainly by the Greek schoolmaster-wisdom then transplanted to the West.

-in this matter it will be sufficient to mention the renowned Roman, Laurentius Valla... after he had made his reputation by disproving the indifferent fable concerning the apostolic origin of the name "symbol", as the Confession of Faith was called, then it became a tradition among the learned that he had disproved the apostolic origin of the Confession of Faith.

If we remember that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Italy was the center of learning, and then, that during the darkness of the middle ages under the yoke of the papacy, the official Church, the worldly episcopal authority, had become the authoritative witness of the Christian Community, that in a word, the most reliable history and the wildest fables and evident falsehoods were thrown together in one heap over which the stupid monks made the sign of the cross as if it had all fallen down from heaven, then it would be the height of injustice for us to expect that the German Reformers should not only have been able to unravel all these elements with complete accuracy but also give a scientifically clear explanation for what they accomplished.



It would be more reasonable to expect that although a German Reformer, like Martin Luther, by a miracle which can only be explained as the working of the Holy Spirit, did build in a creditable manner on the Church's unalterable foundation, he would nevertheless in his polemical writings against the papacy and everything pertaining to it very likely often be led astray by the new scientific knowledge of heathen origin with which he had allied himself against the dominant superstition and ignorance.

It is from this viewpoint that we must consider the Lutheran Reformation in regards to the relationship of the Church to Theology, as consisting in this; that the Bible was opened anew for the whole Christian Community, for enlightenment in the unalterable Christian Faith and as a defense against all myths, legends and lies concerning the original apostolic Christianity.

When now the question is asked whether the Lutheran Reformation also in this domain shall be continued, then I answer with the deepest conviction and without the least reservation; yes, of course, it is to be continued like everything else by going forward from clarity to greater clarity so that now we will be able to discern more clearly the consequences of the immutability of the Christian Faith, and under what conditions the Bible can serve as the book of Christian enlightenment and defense against fictions for which it self evidently has been given to us.

In regards to theology we are therefore in the same position with regards to the Lutheran Reformation as with the state and the church itself.

For we not only approve of it in the time in which it happened, but we rejoice over it because it was intended to be Christian and to be comprehensive. It was also the best which under the circumstances could be experienced by the Christian Community.

But we cannot possibly declare it a fully completed work, for it by no means brought the Church back to its original state.

Unlike his latter day mimics, Luther never disregarded the witness of church history which self evidently alone can teach us what Christians have believed and what the genuine apostolic Christianity really is.

But nevertheless we have to admit that even Luther:

- a. rejected the oral tradition concerning the Faith without making any clear distinction between what he rejected and the Confession of Faith at Baptism together with the Words of Institution at both Sacraments.
- b. insisted that everything claiming universal authority in the Church must be provable from Scripture.
- c. disregarded the testimony of church history concerning that which was in the church from the beginning if he did not find this corroborated in the Bible.
- d. declared the whole development of the order of salvation as set forth in the Augsburg Confession to be a collection of articles of Faith which all true Christians should accept.

I believe that all the theologians in the Lutheran community who have any right to be heard will agree that this is what Luther really did.



at concerning the defensibility of this, we highly disagree. For while one side with Luther entirely, the majority will allow that he is right only in three fourths of the matter, rejecting altogether the Augsburg Confession's claim to universal authority.

Although I for a long time have leaned toward the first opinion, I have now for some time insisted that Luther was manifestly wrong on all of the forenamed points.

I maintain therefore, against all radicals, and against everything that in times past has favored them:

- a. that the oral Confession of Faith at Baptism is independent of all Scripture and that, being the unanimous testimony of the Christian Community concerning its Faith, therefore the most valid testimony that can be given concerning what all Christians have believed from the beginning.
- b. that this Confession of Faith, as the condition for membership in the Christian Community, is the Church's unalterable Rule of Faith and fundamental law, which in indissoluble union with Baptism forms the only valid boundary line between the Church and the world, or between the true Christianity and what is not Christianity.
- c. that the oral Word at the Sacraments and especially the Confession of Faith is the fundamental rule for scripture interpretation in Christendom by which every theologian who wishes to belong to the Christian Church shall and must guide himself.
- d. that the Bible was not originally the Rule of Faith in the Christian Church nor can it, because of its nature, be the Rule of Faith in the Christian Church.
- e. that a more distinct boundary line than ever should now be drawn between what all Christians must believe and confess and what must be left to the free workings of the Spirit and of each individual Christian.
- f. that therefore theology should enjoy a far greater freedom than Luther thought proper, but without having any claim to the least of that authority over the Faith and the Church which the Reformers, according to their views, logically had to allow it to have.

It is a well known fact that a person is accepted as a member of our church-union through baptism and not through Bible reading. And if we believe what we read in the Bible, then no one can in any way deny that this has always been true in the Christian Community. Furthermore, baptism is imparted only on the terms of that Faith which the Confession which must be made at baptism expresses. And in our church communion, this Confession is therefore undeniably the Rule of Faith and Fundamental Law. For it obviously could not be changed without the old faith-union thereby coming to an end and a new one begun.



It is a self evident consequence that whatever is the Rule of Faith and the Fundamental Law for the entire Christian Community must also be the same for those of its members who are learned in the Scriptures. They may therefore under no pretext whatever deny or contradict the least part of that which all Christians must believe and confess.

-there can be no possible instance among Christians where proficiency in the Scriptures may be allowed to rule over the Faith. On the contrary, if scripture learning is to be Christian, then it must let itself be ruled by the Faith.

- the Word of Faith and the Words of Institution in the Church constitute a fully valid witness concerning the original Christianity which does not need to be proven by any Scripture, but, on the contrary, is the unalterable rule for scripture interpretation for all the theologians in Christendom,-

As we all know, the Bible consists of the Old and New Testaments. Neither of these two parts could at the beginning of the Christian Church be its Rule of Faith, for the books of the Old Testament do not contain the Christian Faith and the books of the New Testament were not yet written.

If we therefore want to maintain that we have the same Rule of Faith and the same Baptismal Covenant as the original Apostolic Church, then we must necessarily look for it in something which may be as old as the Church, not in something which according to its own admission is younger.

Now it is evident that our Confession of Faith and Baptismal Covenant may be just as old as the Church, but that the books of the New Testament cannot be as old is just as evident.

-the apostolic epistles, far from claiming to be a rule of faith not only presuppose the knowledge of the Christian Faith in their readers but expressly refer them to their Baptismal Covenant and to the oral word by which the Gospel had been preached to them and say that not even an angel from heaven may be allowed to make them depart from what they have heard and been baptized in.

This apostolic reference to something preceding, something oral, and not to be deviated from, makes it impossible to agree with the apostles and at the same time use their epistles as a rule of faith. And this clear presupposition of the Faith as something known to all their readers makes the epistles entirely unsuited to be a rule of faith since it makes their correct interpretation dependent on something the readers must already possess....it was in particular a certain faith in Christ with a certain baptismal covenant and baptismal effect that the apostolic epistles presuppose,-

Thus does the onery victoriously drive us from that Scripture on which we have relied back to the Word of Faith which, in spite of Scripture, we have despised. But if we only take that Word in our mouths and into our hearts, then, as the apostle writes, the Lord is with us so that we no longer ask who is to bring Him down from heaven or up from the depths, but go forward manfully in his strength with the Faith in our hearts and the Confession on our lips.



As soon as we in our Confession of Faith at Baptism show forth that Faith which the apostles presupposed, and make this unalterable Word of Faith our only rule for scripture interpretation, then we have determined precisely who that Holy Spirit is who we maintain shall explain the Scriptures, namely that Holy Spirit by whom Jesus, the Virgin Mary's Son was conceived, that Holy Spirit in whom we believe, together with the Father and the Son, and who in baptism creates the Communion of Saints where there is forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

And then it is easy for us to prove how Christians shall and must understand Scripture, -

-since not one letter of the books of the New Testament yet existed when the first Christian baptism was performed, then the Confession of Faith can not have been derived from these books.

When we examine the history of the Church with Christian earnestness and attention, then the heresies are undeniably the great stumbling block on our way.

-when a community really has a Faith upon which it builds its hope of salvation, and is in earnest about it, then it self evidently cannot acknowledge anyone as a member who either denies or openly contradicts the Faith of that community. Therefore, when most theologians nowadays declare that any exclusion from the Church is unallowable, yes, even call it shameful heresy mongering, then either they are completely blind or they themselves have no faith unto salvation which can be denied or contradicted.

But what offends us, and when we prize love as the bond of perfection, not only offends but also grieves us, is that we see many judged as heretics either with manifest injustice or at least for insufficient reasons. And even if we disregard what resulted from the Church's wrong relationship to the state, there is still a good deal left which obviously is caused by its wrong relationship to theology, which already, at an early date, became so complicated that it seemed it never could be cleared up.

As far as we from this great distance are able to judge, it seems that no real misfortune happened during the first three centuries. No one who had not openly broken his baptismal covenant and refused to repent was excluded from the Church. Nevertheless, the discussions with Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, are already somewhat complicated.

And at the Council of Nicea, it is evident that at least a wrong procedure was followed. For either it should have been proved that Arius had broken his baptismal covenant, or he should not have been expelled from the Church. The reason for his expulsion was that he refused to use a certain expression about the Lord which was found neither in the Confession of Faith nor in Scripture. The first decisive step was thereby taken across the boundary line into the boundless void. For if a man may be declared a heretic although he, as far as human eyes can see, has kept his baptismal covenant, then it does not matter much whether he is judged according to the greatest number of votes in an assembly of bishops or according to the scripture interpretation which rules at the moment. The procedure in either case is equally arbitrary and indefensible. The feeling that this was the case bore fruit in the East in the ordinance that the Nicene Confession instead of the Apostolic was thereafter to be used as the baptismal covenant.



However, it was a poor defense of this retrospective law to blame it on Arius, and the remedy was worse than the disease since by changing the baptismal covenant, they disfigured it and actually made the whole Eastern Church a dead community.

In the West, on the other hand, it seems that no one since the days of Irenaeus had thought of any difference between the baptismal covenant and all those teachings which were regarded as of apostolic teaching and institution. Everything that offended against this was without further ado judged to be heresy. And what this led to later when the discretion of the Roman bishop became the criterion as to what was apostolic is understandable. For Christians this would have been bad enough even if it had not become the custom under the papacy to enlighten heretics by consigning them to the stake and thus exclude them from the world instead of from the Church.

It was self evidently Martin Luther's desire that expulsion from the Church should be a spiritual, not a worldly matter and that it should not take place because of any and ever peculiarity in a man's thinking but only because of a persistent contradiction of the fundamental Christian truths. That was his desire, but it went no further than that.

For the National Churches, just as much as the papal church-state, made use of the worldly arm to silence their opponents. Furthermore, their Symbolic Books, in their entirety - in other words, the total result of the type of biblical scholarship dominant at the time these books were made authoritative - were considered to be synonymous with the fundamental truths of Christianity.

It is obvious that neither the Augsburg Confession nor any other development of the way of salvation and the main teachings of Scripture can claim universal authority in the Christian Church, even only as a theological syllabus. For we could not possibly expect that either Irenaeus or Augustine or any other teacher in Christendom before 1530 should have adhered to the Augsburg Confession which only then came into existence. For that which from the beginning of Christianity up to 1530 was Christian teaching must manifestly be Christian teaching after 1530 whether or not it agrees with the Augsburg Confession.

But if even the very best symbolic book can have no more universal authority than any papal bull, even as a theological syllabus, then it obviously much less can have such authority as a confession of faith, even if it were inspired. For one can not require further conditions for remaining in the Community than those established for admittance into it without contradicting oneself.

This the reformers of the 16th century neither hooded nor understood.

- although we cannot say that the Augsburg Confession has universal authority, nevertheless the theologians of the Apostolic Church will never find anything but matters of secondary importance therein to disapprove of.

Nevertheless, it is evident that all national churches which have set forth these symbolic books as touch stones for sound Christian teaching or even made them rules of faith for the Church, have acted altogether indefensibly.

Although, as we have seen, the Bible can neither be the Rule of Faith in the Christian Church or be understood independently, still it is self evidently designed to be, and well fitted to be, the common book



for enlightenment and edification in the Christian Community and to be the guide and touch stone for sound teaching in accordance with the Confession of Faith where such teaching and on the whole, the Church Word, is found to be insufficient. For after the unanimous testimony of the Christian Community comes that of its teaching profession. And in the testimony of the teaching profession, i.e., at the ordination of clergymen, the Bible is included, insofar as a book can there be included.

- the Bible is the inexhaustible store house from which the Holy Spirit, the living soul of the Christian Community, distributes to each one what he needs and from which He teaches the consecrated servants of the New Testament, as scribes taught for the Kingdom of God, to take both new and old for the enlightenment and edification of the Church.

Where therefore the Bible is not the minister's priceless manual and daily register over the Church's spiritual domain, not to mention where it is laid on the shelf and locked away from the Community, there faith is dead and the Spirit departed. There the house of prayer has become an open sepulchre and will soon be transformed into a den of robbers.

But where people imagine that the Lord, in spite of His definite denial, has set the light in his house under a bushel instead of on a candle stick where it may shine forth for all those who enter, and that is what people imagine when they search for the Faith in the Book instead of hearing it in the Confession and therefore seek the living among the dead by seeking the living Faith in the dead letters of the printed page, there the Faith is also dead and the Spirit rejected, there the house of prayer is also an open sepulchre which will soon become a den of robbers, as it now is, wherever the theologians with their scripture interpretations want to deprive the Christian Community of its Christian Faith and hope.

But where the Spirit rules and the Faith is alive, there the Faith itself makes its life known in the Confession. There the light is alive because it is the light of life. There the Spirit speaks to the Community about all the wonderful things of God with the flaming tongues with which He endowed the apostles. And there the ministers are at home in their Bibles as well as in their other studies and there they find on every page types and portraits, memories and beckonings of that Lord and that Spirit which they as little seek in a book as in other buildings and works of men's hands because they have already found the Lord and His Spirit in the believing Community and they daily come closer to them in the Word of Faith which they receive into their hearts and confess and proclaim with their lips in a living manner. Such clergymen will, like watchmen on high towers, always see the enemy long before he appears and will be able to detect the spirit of error under any disguise.

Since the conception of Christianity by even the most Christian and most spiritual theologian will have its shortcomings and being the conception of an individual, may not claim universal authority, therefore theological freedom within Christian boundary lines is a just demand. On the other hand, the unchangeableness of the Faith, and the Baptismal Covenant, demands such limitations, which no one except the Lord and His apostles have the right to impose, and which all the members of the Community have at Baptism orally acknowledged and which Faith is presupposed at the Lord's Supper.

We must believe that within these limitations, free discussion of Scripture, the genuineness of its different constituent parts, the reliability of the accepted texts, the certainty of the divine enlightenment that produced scripture, the means of correct interpretation,



the applicability of its different parts, the meaning of each separate passage - we must believe that such discussion will not harm but instead benefit Christianity. And we must believe that the Scriptures in inseparable connection with the Church Word is a sufficient means for the Spirit to enlighten the Community and ward off its possible seduction, but no one shall be excluded as a heretic as long as he has not broken the covenant of his baptism and refuses to repent though this be made clear to him.

This view springs from the fundamentally unchangeable yet spiritually free nature of the Christian Community. And church history warns us on every page not to depart from this principle, neither veering to the right or to the left and cautioning us to heed a voice behind us which says: This is the way. Follow it!

Now what previously has been so difficult a matter in Christendom will now be an easy matter, namely, to determine the right relationship between Church and School, or what amounts to the same, between Christianity and theology. For this relationship is plainly found in the relationship between the Church Word and Holy Scripture. The Church Word expresses what in our Christian Community is fixed, Scripture expresses that which is free. The most learned theologian among us may as little break his Baptismal Covenant as the most unlearned person. He may not use our Church Book to combat anything which has valid testimony as belonging to the Apostolic Church. For the rest, he must be allowed on his own responsibility before the Lord and his colleagues to treat the Church Book and to deal with the scientific aspect of Christianity according to his own discretion. This finds its justification in the nature of the kingdom of God in which the freedom of no member may be limited more than is necessary for the welfare of the whole. It is also necessary. Otherwise sound teaching could not be preserved, nor could enlightenment make the progress which it must make before we can learn thoroughly to understand the Bible. This last is indeed the scientific goal of our Lutheran communion.

- But when the bishops or the church wardens of the temporal state make further limitations so that the clergy, so to speak, must preach according to a book of homilies, and theologians in their research must be bound by other symbolical books than the Bible, there a yoke is laid on the Community which may or may not be bearable, but nevertheless, is always a yoke that galls, hinders the free development of the mind, and gnaws away at spiritual life itself.

Here then we see what is right and what is altogether wrong in the demand for scientific freedom which is so loudly set forth by the modern theologians in North Germany and also among us. For it is as wrong as it can be that they wish to be allowed to break their Baptismal Covenant, combat the Christian Faith and rebuild the Church according to their own ideas. Nevertheless it is proper that they protest against every bond which only Symbolic Books or worldly ordinances have laid upon them. All such bonds are clearly of the same kind as the papal yoke in the middle ages. They lead, if not necessarily to idolatry, then at least, to petrification.

The Church self evidently does not exist for the sake of theology but for the sake of salvation. And theology does not only exist for the sake of the Church but also for the sake of enlightenment in general. And although it is the one and only necessity that the Church of Christ remain steadfast on its rock foundation, it is nevertheless shameful and harmful for the Church if the work of enlightenment comes to a halt.



It will then go as the universal law provides - whatever does not go forward, soon begins to go backward. Even a kingdom of the world that wishes to become old and renowned in human history, must so far keep up with the times that it does not remain ignorant of any enlightenment which new times may bring.

If this is true of a temporal state, how much more must it be true of the kingdom of God on earth. This kingdom has a marvellous destiny to live up to. It is to strive to encompass the entire world and is destined to outlast it. How could it possibly be proper in such a kingdom, the fundamental Constitution of which is guaranteed by its heavenly King, in whose rock foundation all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid, and where it is proclaimed from the housetops that nothing is hidden that shall not be revealed, how can it be possible in such a kingdom to hinder enlightenment or to set limitations for the free development of the spirit other than those the Spirit has established Himself as the divine vice-regent in the name of the Lord?

No, while we boldly reject every so called enlightenment, according to which, the fundamental law of the kingdom of God is supposed to be fundamental error...and firmly, but only spiritually, banish into exile every theologian who openly has broken his oath of allegiance and bears arms against the fatherland,...we at the same time proclaim freedom for every loyal citizen and counsel merely that freedom be tempered by love. For love is the bond in our Community which binds our hearts together, and love is the living light in which freedom and necessary authority merge.

As an image of this, the bishop, in the beginning stood at the Lord's Table with the bread and the cup, with the keys and the staff, while the people in the Saviour's name knelt about him. The learned knelt together with the unlearned and forgot all external differences because of the word: "One body are we all, for we are all partakers of the one bread that came down from heaven, and we all were given to drink of the one Spirit, even as there is one Lord, one Faith, one God, the Father of us all, over us all, with and in us all."

Receiving thus the Lord's blessing, each one went to his own worldly calling and earth bound tasks with heaven in his heart and eternity before his vision.

Of this image we now have left only the shadow.

The shadow cannot regenerate the substance, but it can and shall remind us of what we lack. And where, as in Denmark, the episcopal consecration never has been rejected but has only been lacking since the Reformation, there the Lord will surely give it to us with the fulness of his blessing. (\*)

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 (\*) This is a reference to the fact that at the Reformation, all of the bishops remained faithful to the pope and left Denmark. Their successors in the episcopal sees were all consecrated by Dr. Johannes Egenhagen, and therefore, according to the doctrine of the apostolic succession, did not become true bishops. Probably as a result of his contacts with the Church of England during his visit to England just before this work was written, Grundtvig at about this time began to demand that the bishops of the Danish Church be reconsecrated by true bishops so that the Danish Church also might have true bishops. However, by 1865 at the latest, he finally abandoned this view although it formed a prominent part in his thinking at least as late as the mid 1850's. However, not all his followers agreed with his later change of opinion and consequently, even at a later time there were voices in Denmark asking that the Danish bishops be reconsecrated by Swedish and English bishops, who are in possession of the "apostolic succession".



When this comes to pass, so that the presbyters stand at Baptism as the watchmen of Zion in the power of the Spirit, and the bishop stands at the Altar as a real image of the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep, while the Christian Community gladly lets its light shine in good works and the scribes watch over the Book by the light of the night lamp lit by the altar candles, and see that the church doors are open both for going out and coming in, then everything is in its Christian order and then the Lutheran Reformation has been completed.

Then we will not be tempted to envy the stillness of the four-square Papal Church, which is like a stagnant pool, nor the constant movement of the Zwinglian Church like the waves of the sea before every wind, But again grant the world a vision which even the angels will rejoice to behold, sailing the ship of salvation fearlessly over the waves, because we have believed and know that the carpenter's son who built it is one with that Master Builder who spread the vaulted sky above the waters and has the clouds for his chariot and because that Spirit who searches the deep things of God is our helmsman, our Confession of Faith our guiding star that never fails, the Holy Scriptures our infallible sea-chart stamped by Him who has set the oceans in their boundaries, measures the heavens in a span and calls all the stars by name.

And finally, because we never lack provisions but with a joyful heart are invited to a daily festival at the Lord's Table where He feeds millions with the one bread and teaches His servants that the bread by which man lives is the Word which proceeds from the mouth of God.

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2/20/57/