

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Ecumenism and Evangelical Christianity: The Ausburg Confession and Catholic Unity

Review Author: Antonio V. Romualdez

Philippine Studies vol. 13, no. 3 (1965): 743–746

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

tively densely populated and had a fairly good system of road and river transportations with even a railroad to boot. This must have facilitated communications considerably and made relatively easy the supervision of the rapidly growing work.

There are two chapters on ecumenical relations and developments. Strictly speaking, ecumenicity connotes universality, especially, of the Christian Church as a whole. The Methodist Church in the Philippines is related organically to The Methodist Church in the U. S. A., which emphasizes "connectionalism" or world Methodism. Therefore, Dr. Deats' two chapters deal primarily with union efforts and relations with the federation efforts of Protestant Churches which finally culminated in the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. It is encouraging to note that he does not think that the final outcome with reference to union and ecumenical relationships has been resolved. His statement about the rapid population growth, the divided Protestant witness, and the united witness of the Roman Catholic Church seem clear indications that the final chapter on church union and ecumenical relations with churches in the Philippines and ecumenical relations with churches in other lands has not been written for The Methodist Church in the Philippines or for that matter, for any other Protestant denomination in this country.

With the interplay of historical, geographical and other forces here as in any other Asian country, it would be presumptuous to predict what will happen in the future, especially, when seen through the eyes of a western reviewer. But the Protestant churches in the Philippines are indebted to Dr. Deats for a presentation of the background of his church here, which will, it is hoped, provoke some thoughtful consideration by other denominations of their own background and their present-day involvement.

ERNEST FRIE

ECUMENISM AND EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION AND CATHOLIC UNITY. By Max Lackmann. New York: Herder and Herder, 1963. xv, 159 pp.

This book is an invitation to a dialogue extended "to our Catholic brother." It is the attempt of a Lutheran minister to present himself to Catholic readers as simply himself—"a loyal follower of the Lutheran tradition," who "like many an other Lutheran thinker of our time, . . . conceives this as a genuine commitment to the Catholic Church." Pastor Lackmann, in writing this book, is trying

to share with Catholics a valuable insight which, if understood and appreciated from the point of view of both Catholicism and Lutheranism, could constitute a sure basis for ecumenical discussion. The insight is the "truth, long since validated by historical and theological research, that one is a bad 'protestant' if one irritably refuses to be regarded as a Catholic Christian or if one recognizes no sense of obligation to the Roman Catholic Church." This is the core of Pastor Lackmann's book—this, that is, in terms of the Catholic dimension of Lutheranism (Evangelical Christianity), best seen in the *Augsburg Confession*.

Were the Catholic to grant, even for the sake of discussion, Pastor Lackmann's thesis, he would have to face up to the question of why, in spite of the intentions of the parties involved, the Reformation resulted in a divided Christianity. The Catholic, the author notes, would have to explore the possibility that "there must be a joint responsibility for the separated Christians which is deeply rooted in history." He would have to ask whether or not somehow the "mother Church's very being is bound up with that of its Evangelical brothers, whose existence is to be understood and justified—if at all—only on the basis of their coming into being for the sake of the mother Church." The Catholic would have to check if "the 'case of Protestantism'—however one might classify it from the Roman Catholic viewpoint in the category of heresy—is historically, religiously, theologically a *special* case in Western Christianity," and to see "that one cannot do justice to it with what 'for centuries... has been the normal attitude of the Church.'" Pastor Lackmann seems to be pointing here at the applicability at least to Evangelical Christianity of the theological opinion propounded in the nineteenth century by Johann Adam Moehler and gaining currency today, an opinion which, as summed up by Father Gregory Baum in his book *Progress and Perspectives* [See PS XII (1964)], "understands the Catholic Church as an organic unity of vital tensions constantly bringing forth new life." Where Charity, which is "the binding force of these contrasting movements," is lacking, when the letter is stifling the spirit of the law, there these "vital tensions" become "contradictions," become a cause of division.

In the light of what has been said, Pastor Lackmann suggests that any dialogue towards the reunion of Catholics and Evangelical Christians must begin at the point in history and in the discussion, where both 'parties' are still in some sort of theological relation to one another," or, in Moehler's terms, are still "contrasting movements" *within* the Church that could still bring forth new life. That "point", in the author's estimation, is the *Augsburg Confession*.

Six theses about the *Augsburg Confession* are presented, the consideration of which, according to Pastor Lackmann, "can make the necessary preparation" for reunion. These, except for the first

which merely establishes the relevance of the *Augsburg Confession* as the "binding norm for ecclesiastical and apostolic teaching, preaching, and interpretation of the Scriptures" among the Lutherans, unfold both negatively and positively the Catholic dimension of Evangelical Christianity. All six are significant and well worth quoting:

1. The *Confessio Augustana* is recognized by the Evangelical regional churches, which are descended from the Lutheran Reformation, as the binding norm for ecclesiastical and apostolic teaching, preaching, and interpretation of the Scriptures (p. 35).

2. The *Confessio Augustana* contains a Catholic confession to the ancient Catholic and apostolic deposit of the faith—also to the Catholic and apostolic deposit as it is present in the Roman Catholic Church (p. 43).

3. The *Confessio Augustana* condemns and rejects the ancient heresies as well as the "pseudo-Catholicism" of medieval theology and folk piety which the Roman Catholic Church also condemns and rejects as un-Christian and un-Catholic (p. 65).

4. The *Confessio Augustana* contains new Catholic doctrinal experiences and theological insights which belong to the whole Catholic Church. They are based on the ancient Catholic doctrinal experiences and theological insights of the Church. Their Catholic appropriation and assimilation is, as much as ever, the task of the Roman Catholic Church, a task given her by the Lord of the one, holy Catholic Church (p. 75).

5. The *Confessio Augustana* clearly adduces anti-Roman and anti-Catholic negatives which dispute and structurally alter the doctrine and form of the Western Church. These negatives are advanced as demands of the Gospel, the Holy Scriptures, and the traditional faith of the Catholic Church in its earliest centuries. A confrontation with these negatives is still today the task of the Roman Catholic Church (p. 85).

6. All the statements of the *Confessio Augustana* are related to the Roman Catholic Church. The CA is meant to be a Catholic contribution to the Catholic Church. At the same time this contribution resulted in the dissolution of Catholic unity. We must therefore investigate the un-Catholic presuppositions upon which the pros and cons of both confessors and opponents of the CA were based, and which meant that a solution to the given Catholic task could be found only in the un-Catholic confessional disunity of Western Christians (p. 107).

Pastor Lackmann's treatments of the fourth and sixth theses are especially thought-provoking. His observations on Catholic belief and practices seem generally accurate and well-founded; some, however, require qualifications which a more profound understanding of Catholicism can give. Speaking, for example, of "the preaching of the Word of God as 'holy ground,' as a jewel of the Church, as a holy treasure beside the Sacrament of the Altar in the Mass," he states that "this is still for the Roman Catholic a completely foreign notion" (p. 81). Without denying that Roman Catholics in general, both clergy and laity, have yet to manifest a genuine appreciation of it this reviewer feels that the belief that the preaching of God's Word is a "holy treasure beside the Sacrament of the Altar" has never really disappeared from the life of the Church. The very structure of the Mass points to the fact that "the Word of God always has been and always is living in the Church" (see Rev. Louis Bouyer, "The Word of God Lives in the Liturgy."). The infallibility of the Church, a doctrine indicated in the Constitution *On the Church*, is itself founded on the premise that the vital connection between God's Word and the Church has always persisted throughout history. The doctrines of papal infallibility and of the role of tradition in Christian belief

are fully understandable only if one does not overlook the organic relationship between the Word of God and the Church.

In his introduction, Pastor Lackmann makes the observation that "it is time that separated Christians learned to know each other." This book has been written in order that Roman Catholics and Lutherans can cast away what has for so long burdened the names of "Protestant" and "Catholic"—the "mortgage of a polemic which falsifies and renders unintelligible what happened and is supposed to have happened four centuries ago." For his success in this, Pastor Lackmann deserves the congratulations and, indeed, the attention of Protestant and Catholic alike.

ANTONIO V. ROMUÁLDEZ

LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH'S HISTORY

REFORM OF THE CHURCH: Crisis and Criticism in Historical Perspective. By Robert E. McNally, S.J. New York: Herder and Herder, 1963. 140 pp.

The complaint is frequently made against the professional historian that he is only interested in heaping up names, dates, and facts, concerning himself with obscure events and persons of the past which have no relevance for us today. The book under review is a pointed answer to such criticism. The author, a Professor of Church history, while carefully avoiding the fallacy of seeking answers from the history of the past for modern problems, paints on a broad canvas the life of the Church over two and a half centuries of crisis, while wisely pointing out its contemporary and perennial relevance to her total life.

Though the book makes no pretensions to original discoveries concerning the history of the Church from the end of the thirteenth century to the completion of the Council of Trent in the sixteenth, its author has drawn the research and conclusions of the best professional historical scholarship into a dynamic picture of these years in the life of the Church. With an eye to all the multiple facets of Church life—Church-State relations, liturgy, theology, and spirituality, — he traces the growing decadence which came on the Church from the end of the thirteenth century, culminating in the immense scandal of the Great Western Schism, in which the helplessness of the Papacy to revivify the Church was made manifest by the spectacle of a Christendom divided between two and even three rival Popes. In desperation, a remedy was sought in the ecumenical Councils of the fifteenth century. Though they restored the unity of the Papacy, the effort of the Con-