

The Assistant Pastor

March and April, 1943

Be Ready Always To Give An Answer

"I have made Thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but his blood* will I require at thine hand. . . . Yet if Thou warn the wicked . . . thou hast delivered thy soul." Ezekiel 3, 8f.

Many persons think that it is uncharitable and unkind on the part of a pastor to expose to his people the false teachings of other churches and sects. But a pastor in so doing is moved by a love for his members whom he would warn of the dangers involved in the acceptance of other religions. Indeed, as the scripture passage above plainly shows, it is the duty of the pastor to give such warning. Only when the pastor does his duty in this respect will his members "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3, 15).

Jesus does not say, "If you have a religion, you are my disciple and will be saved." He says, "If ye continue in **my word** then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8, 31-32).

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

In accordance with the Scriptural principle enunciated on the cover of this issue of the Assistant Pastor your pastor wishes to discuss with you in these pages the reasons why false teachings have crept into the Christian religion. We shall not be particularly concerned here with the specific false teachings themselves. We shall rather be concerned with the facts and factors which have made the false teachings not only possible, but inevitable. In order to understand and be able to cope with the false doctrines in the Christian church, we must understand where and how those false doctrines have their source and origin.

The Foundation of our Lutheran Faith

The Lutheran church teaches that

1) The Bible is the word of God, (The holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. 1, 21; All scripture is given by inspiration of God, 2 Tim. 3, 16), that

2) Only the Bible teaches us the way to salvation, (The holy scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. 3, 15) and that

3) The Bible is the only sure and perfect rule and guide for our faith and life (Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Ps. 119, 105). These doctrines which are the foundation of our faith are proved by the Scripture passages given, and by many other similar passages that might be quoted. Yet these teachings are denied by all other churches. They build their doctrines upon quite another foundation. Let us see what the foundation of their faith is.

The Foundation of Roman Catholic Faith

We shall not be content here merely to say in our own words what the Roman Catholic Church teaches as to the foundation of its faith, but shall let the leaders and writers of the Catholic Church speak for themselves. We shall give you their teachings in their own words.

The Catholic church accepts the word of God as revealed in the books of the Old and New Testaments as the source of religious teaching. So, indeed does the Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church accepts God's word as it stands in the Bible, but the Catholic accepts the Bible as it is **interpreted** by the Popes, Councils, and traditions of the church. It considers the Bible, as it stands, to be an obscure and unclear book. A Catholic writer, De Bruno, says, "The Fathers of the Church plainly expressed their belief that the written Word of God by itself, without the help of tradition, would always leave disputes unsettled, points of belief and morals undetermined, and true religion a problem unsolved."

The Lutheran Church regards God's Word as infallible, that is, that it cannot err. The Catholic Church goes further, it regards the acts and decrees of the Church as being infallible. In other words it believes that whatever the church decides is right and true. We deny this because we know that the acts of men, even in the church, are and always will be subject to error. The Catholic church regards the Church as a living organ which, itself, is a source of revelation. A Catholic writer, Wilmers, declares, "While previously many a one could not clearly understand revelation on account of the obscurity of Holy Scripture, such difficulty

was now removed through the pronouncement of the Church."

Since the Roman Catholic Church regards the Bible as an obscure book which needs the declarations of the Church to interpret it properly the common people have been discouraged, if not forbidden to read it. In a rule approved by Pope Pius the 4th we read this: "It is manifest by experience that, if the Bible in the vulgar tongue (language of the common people) be suffered to be read everywhere without distinction, more evil than good arises." Pope Leo XII in an encyclical dated May 3, 1824, addressed the Latin Bishops thus: "We also, venerable brothers, in conformity with our apostolic duty, exhort you to turn away your flocks from these poisonous pastures"; i. e. the books of the Bible. I am sure that all who read this will be astonished to learn that a Pope once, in an official pronouncement, called the Bible a poisonous pasture.

To the Roman Catholic Church, therefore, the Bible is only a starting point. The interpretations of the Bible made by the Church, and the doctrines taught by the Church are held to be of greater value, and higher truth, than the words and teachings of the Bible itself. If there is any doubt that this is the teaching of the Catholic Church, the following statements, all made by leaders in the Catholic Church will leave the matter perfectly clear.

"We neither derive our religion from the Scriptures, nor does it depend upon them."

"It is strange that any reasonable man in the present day can imagine for a moment that Almighty God intended the Bible as a text-book of Christian doctrine."

"Scripture is the great depository of the Word of God. Therefore the church is the divinely appointed custodian and interpreter of the Bible. For her office of infallible guide were superfluous if each individual could interpret the Scripture for himself."

"The Scriptures alone can not be a sufficient rule and guide of faith because they cannot, at any time, be within reach of every inquirer; because they are not of themselves clear and intelligible, even in matters of the highest importance; and because they do not contain all the truths necessary for salvation."

"The Catholic Church existed before the Bible; it is possible for the Catholic Church to exist without the Bible, for the Catholic Church is altogether independent of the Bible. The Bible does not give any systematic, complete, and exhaustive treatment of the doctrines of Christ. In many respects it is, like a stenographer's notebook, partial and fragmentary, to be supplemented later on in more elaborate detail by other agencies. Christ never wrote a word of the Bible. One might naturally expect Him to have set the example of writing at least some portions of the Bible if He intended His followers to take their entire religion from it. Christ never ordered His disciples to write any part of the Bible. We might well expect such a command from Him if He desired the members of His church to have recourse to the Bible for their religion."

Of Bible Societies and the distribution of Bibles, Pope Pius VII said on June 29, 1816 that they are "a crafty device by which the very foundations of religion are undermined"; "a pestilence, which

must be remedied and abolished; a defilement of the faith, eminently dangerous to souls; impious machinations of innovators, wickedness of a nefarious scheme; snares prepared for men's everlasting ruin; a new species of tares which our adversary has abundantly sown."

The above paragraphs are quotations from Catholic writers, and they show clearly the attitude that the Roman Catholic Church takes toward the Bible. They state, for example, that "The Scriptures . . . do not contain all the truths necessary for salvation." The Bible says, 2 Tim. 3, 16; "The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation." They deny that the Bible was intended by God as a textbook of Christian Doctrine. The Bible says, John 20, 31; "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." They deny that the Bible was written by Divine command. The Bible says, 2 Pet. 1, 21; "The Holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Since the Roman Catholic Church rejects the Bible as a dependable text-book of Christian Doctrine, and since it holds that the church must use its own judgment in interpreting the Bible and establishing its teachings we can not be surprised that from time to time one false and unbiblical doctrine after the other has crept into their religion.

We can not be surprised to learn that in Catholic Doctrine there are teachings that are not even suggested by the Bible, because once doctrine begins to depart from the teachings of Scripture there is no limit to the fantastic teachings that can be established.

Given the foundation of Catholic faith, namely that the Bible is not reliable, and that the Church is a greater authority in doctrine than the Bible, it is inevitable that there should be false teachings.

The Foundation of Reformed Faith

Errors have crept into Roman Catholic Doctrine because it accepts the Bible merely in the light of the interpretations given it by the Church. The case of the Reformed Church is similar. It also has founded its structure of religious teachings on a faulty foundation. The foundation of Reformed faith is the Bible in the light of human reason.

The Catholic Church says the Bible is not sufficient, it must be interpreted by the Church. The Reformed Church likewise says that the Bible is insufficient, it must be interpreted in the light of human reason.

The Catholic Church makes the Church the supreme authority in matters of doctrine. The Reformed church makes human reason the supreme authority in all religious questions. The fundamental error in both cases is the same. The Lutheran Church accepts the Bible itself as the supreme authority in all matters of Christian doctrine. The Catholic and Reformed Church relies on something apart from and beyond the Scriptures for their teachings.

In a recent book titled, "The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination": a reformed writer, Loraine Boettner says, "This is beyond all doubt the teaching of the Bible and reason." In this statement he clearly places reason, alongside the Bible, as the basis of religious truth.

In defense of their practice of interpreting and

explaining Scripture by human reason, the Reformed Church declares that since God suffered the Bible to be written by men errors have crept into it. One of their spokesmen says, "The holy writers were fallible, and suffered lapses of memory." Thus they weaken the foundation of their faith until the foundation is well-nigh vanished, for they confess their Bible to be full of errors which must be corrected by men who are as subject to error as the writers of Scripture were.

The Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man, and that the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in the human nature of Christ, Col. 2, 9: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." But reformed theologians cannot understand this divine mystery, their reason cannot grasp it, so in the face of the clear passage quoted they say, "The human nature is not sufficiently capacious to contain the whole fulness of God." This simply illustrates what happens when a reformed theologian encounters a Scriptural doctrine which he cannot understand. He either explains it away or else rejects it outright.

The Bible contains many truths which we cannot understand because they are spiritual matters which can only be spiritually discerned. 1 Cor., 2, 14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." When reason begins to try to explain these spiritual truths there can be only one result, namely that there will be as many explanations and interpretations as there are theologians looking for the explanations. And that explains in large part why there are so many reformed church bodies, and why it is impossible to know exactly what any one reformed body actually teaches, because even within the same body there are differences in opinion, and divergence in doctrine.

MRS. OLE O. OVERBOE

Brita Christenson, daughter of Kristen and Eli Bergteig, was born on the 16th of September, 1865. Her birthplace, as designated in her copy of Skriver's "Sjæle-Skat" which she presented to her pastor shortly before her death was "Gaarden Teigen i Lysters Prestegjeld i Bergenstift i Norge." She was baptized and confirmed into the Lutheran faith in her home community in Norway.



On the first of May, 1892, she emigrated from Norway, coming to Jacksonville Township, Chickasaw County, Iowa, where she found employment which continued until her marriage to Ole O. Overboe on September 25, 1909. She continued to live on the Overboe homestead, 8 miles northwest of New Hampton after the death of Mr. Overboe on September 18, 1937, until ill health compelled her to leave her old home.

Mrs. Overboe suffered an illness of five years duration which became acute the last few months

The Assistant Pastor

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of her lifetime during which she was given affectionate care by her daughters at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Cutsforth.

She departed this life on Tuesday February 23, 1943 at the Cutsforth home at the age of 77 years, 5 months, and 7 days. She was given Christian burial at Jerico Lutheran Church in which she had held membership during her lifetime in America. She was preceded in death by her husband, and by one son, Albert, who died in Hollonquist, Canada on January 22, 1930. She is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Clarence Cutsforth and Mrs. Carl Vigdal, eight grandchildren, six brothers and two sisters; Halvor of Lawler, Iowa, John, of Canada, Herman, residing in California, and Christopher, Johannes, and Lars, who reside in Lyster Sogn, Norway, Mrs. Ingeborg Vigdal of Lawler, and Elisabeth Loven of Oslo, Norway.

THE FATAL ERROR

The Scriptures teach that as a result of the Atonement (the suffering and death of Christ for sinners) God has pronounced all men just in His sight. In accordance with 2 Cor. 5, 21 we believe that God charged our sin and guilt against Christ, and has now credited us with Christ's righteousness. "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In other words, the basis of our justification is the merit of Christ our Savior. The Scriptures further teach that we are personally enabled to participate in the benefits of this justification through our faith, and not by our good works; Rom. 3, 28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." That our faith is a result of God's grace toward us is clear also; Eph. 2, 8-9: "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The Doctrine of Justification (Retfærdiggjørelse) is the central truth of Scripture. It is the one truth that a sinner must know to be saved. Yet the Reformed and Catholic Churches, each in their own way have rejected it.

Contrary to what the Scriptures teach regarding Justification the Catholic Church declares in the Council of Trent; "If anyone saith that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtaining the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will, let him be anathema."

The Reformed Doctrine of Justification is much the same as the Catholic Doctrine for in the words of a typical Reformed writer, "One must know that we, in asserting that we are justified by faith are not excluding, but including, good works."

The first question of the Orthodox (Catholic) Confession reads as follows, "What must an Orthodox and Catholic Christian hold and observe in order to inherit eternal life? Answer: Right faith and good works."

How far these doctrines have strayed from Scripture! "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2, 8-9.

We would by no means imply that members of the Reformed or Catholic Churches can not be saved. We know that whoever believes in Jesus, and trusts in Him for salvation will be saved. But we do know this: Whoever trusts in his own good works for salvation will surely be lost.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We wish to acknowledge receipt of the following contributions to the Assistant Pastor. Some of these contributions should have been listed in the last issue of the Assistant Pastor.

Orvin Knutson, \$1; J. O. Knutson, \$1; Norman Anderson, \$1; Will Mettner, \$1; L. A. Robinson, \$1; Henry A. Knutson, \$1; Ole Ellingson, \$2; Carl O. Knutson, \$1; Clarence Cutsforth, \$2; C. J. Slindee, \$1; Mrs. John Sesbeau, Rock Island, Ill., \$1.50; Mrs. Frank Dow, Kansas City, Mo., \$1.50; Mrs. Caroline Vigdal, \$1; Mrs. John Kelly, \$1; L. C. Culbert, \$1; O. J. Knutson, \$1; Mrs. Clara Borlaug, \$1; Ned Borlaug, \$1.

CORRECTION

The following contributions were erroneously omitted from the annual report of contributions for current expenses as published in the January Assistant Pastor.

O. A. Knutson, \$15; O. J. Knutson, \$5; J. P. Landsverk, \$8; Harold Munson, \$8; Harold Munson, \$3 for Furnace Fund.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Jerico

Holy Thursday: Communion Service, 10:30 A. M., Norwegian; 8 P. M., English.

Easter: Service at 2:30 P. M.

Confirmation: May 16, 10:30 A. M., Communion Service, 8 P. M.

Saude

Good Friday: Communion Service, 10:30 A. M., Norwegian; 8 P. M., English.

Easter: Service at 11 A. M.

Confirmation: May 23, 10:30 A. M., Communion Service, 8 P. M.

Offerings

You are requested to bring your Lenten Offering to the services on Holy Thursday or Good Friday, and to Bring your Convention Offering on Confirmation Sunday.

BAPTISM

Jule Ann, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Roberson received Christian Baptism at the Jerico church on Sunday, March 7, 1943. Her birthdate was February 5. Mr. and Mrs. T. W. Munson, and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Roberson were sponsors.