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The Doctrine of the Church at the Reformation

E. GORDON RUPP

A Roman Catholic scholar has recently protested against reading the historical pronouncements of the Church as a fundamentalist reads the Bible. Rather, he insists, we must begin with the historical setting, of what men were reacting against as well as what they seem to affirm. This may sound a truism, but, as he shows, the results are startling when applied to the Council of Trent, and I suggest they would be equally shaking if applied to the doctrinal section of the Methodist Deed of Union. It suggests the method for this chapter, for in fact we might treat it in several ways. We might adopt the method of many ecumenical confrontations and examine the matter confessionally—giving most of the space to Luther and Calvin—saying less about Zwingli and Bucer, throwing in a few references to Anabaptists out of deference to the recent incursion of the Pentecostalists. More rewarding, we might treat the whole thing in terms of biblical exegesis and see what the Reformers make of the great biblical texts about the Church. To do

this would require a large volume to which we might add a further volume on the Reformer's use of Augustine and the old Fathers as exegetic aids. Or we might systematically list some themes and see what the Reformers say about them, but this begs two questions, that there is, in fact, a common ecclesiology of the Reformers, and whether our themes and our questions are, in fact, what might concern the men of the sixteenth century.

To begin with, the historical and empirical context seems justified by the literature on the subject. It has often been pointed out how few are the medieval writings of the nature of the Church. The most fruitful are the discussions about simony, embedded in the very practical Church-state controversy about investitures in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It is surely of great significance that the two principal tracts on the theme "De Ecclesia" are by John Wycliffe and John Huss, those "Reformers before the Reformation," and a work by Torquemada in the fifteenth century which has direct reference to issues raised by heresies. This theme has never been fruitfully studied in a vacuum, but the church has been prodded into it by an existential crisis in its life. Nor is the context alone important. We must always remember the background of the Roman Church of the later Middle Ages—the intricate, formidable overorganized institution with its great administrative departments and its vast civil service, legalized and secularized and degraded to an extent which the Catholic historian Lortz considers would have affronted the conscience of the early church. It is against this institution with its extreme clericalism only that we can understand the theme which I shall dodge, the "Basingstoke" word of modern anticlericalism—the "priesthood of all believers."

I spoke of Wycliffe and Huss as "Reformers before the Reformation," an old-fashioned phrase, against which in my time I too have had my say. As I grow older, however, I find all those old-fashioned platitudes to have something in them, more perhaps than in the bright half truths which have taken their place. And though John Wycliffe has taken a severe mauling in recent years, notably at Oxford (which has by tradition a curious love-hate relation with its evangelical offspring), the new picture of him as a soured, ambitious intellectual will not quite do either. It is becoming increasingly clear (and a comparison of his teaching with E. H. Tavard's "Holy Writ and Holy Church" confirms it) that in his appeal to the authority of Scripture alone he really does point forward. If his Augustinianism has much in common with Bradwardine and Holcot and Fitz Ralph, at least, unlike theirs, and like the Reformers, his was of an explosive kind. He too blew something up. If we ask why Wycliffe's effect was muffled and stultified, perhaps the answer is not just in the intricacy of his scholasticism—but that he lacked what they had, the tool of printing and the megaphone and microphone of humanism, the revival of the sacred languages and a new orientation of biblical theology.

Because Wycliffe and Huss too faced the conflict with Rome, because they too accepted the supreme authority of the Bible and were steeped in Augustine, they naturally said many things which were said later by the Reformers. What they said is more important than the intriguing question of who borrowed what from whom. S. Harrison Thomson has rightly protested against the view that John Huss simply copied out John Wycliffe on the Church.[1] It is evident that the Bohemian church struggle made Huss use Wycliffe much as Tyndale later handled Luther. In the main points of his doctrine of the Church, however, he does follow Wycliffe. There is the same preference—and it is worth thinking about—for the biblical image of the Church, not so much as the Body but as the Bride of Christ, the same definition of the Church as the company "universitas," almost university of the predestined. Huss even follows Wycliffe in his too subtle distinction between Christ's twofold headship of the Church, one external in his divinity and the other internal in his humanity—a distinction which sounds more like the degree regulations of London University than the New Testament! Martin Schmidt has written a long essay on Wycliffe's doctrine of the Church in the *Gedenkschrift fur Werner Elert.*[2] Like much of Schmidt's work it deserves to be read with careful attention and with caution, but he stresses the importance for Wycliffe of Christology, of the Church as the counterpart of the poor, humble Christ, and he notes too his strong ethical emphasis and his tendency to rest rather in the law than in the gospel.

Luther did not read Huss until well after the public Church struggle began. His own teaching developed difficulties as a result of the situation in which he was plunged in 1517 and especially when, in the months before and after the Leipzig Disputation of 1519, he studied Church history and the nature of the papal power. A generation ago, in a classic essay, Karl Holl affirmed that the whole of the later Lutheran doctrine of the Church is to be found even before this in his first massive course of lectures on the Psalms (1513-14). This view has been critically examined recently in a luminous essay by Holsten Fagerberg in the Elert volume already mentioned. He concludes that if there is more of a remnant of Catholic doctrine in these lectures than Holl admitted, there is also much here that remained constant and evangelical in Luther's later teaching. Some of Luther's most important later writings are concerned with the nature of the Church, the Schmalkaldic Articles of 1537, "Of Councils and the Church" (1539), *Wider Hans Worst* (1541).[3] In this connection it is worth remembering Erikson's fine image that the papacy is for Luther what the great white whale in *Moby Dick* is to Captain Ahab.

Much as Luther owed to Augustine (an essay by Ernst Kinder in the Elert volume shows how deep and intimate the relation was at this point[4]) his great polarity of the Word and of faith broke through previous and medieval conceptions. The counterpoise is evident in his stress on the *cummunio sanctorum,* the inwardness of the Church, as against the overinstitutionalized Catholicism of his day. It is of great importance that he thinks of the Church primarily as a communion of saints, as an affair of persons, even though we agree with Fagerberg that we must not in a nineteenth-century German way say that Luther's thought is of a *Personengemeinschaft.* There is a close connection between justification by faith and the doctrine of the Church. Here, *Coram Deo,* and in our incorporation within the righteousness of God revealed in Christ, all distinctions are done away; there is neither layman nor cleric, but all are one, and all outward distinctions of office are mere *larvae,* masks. I cannot here try to show how important for Luther's view of the Church are his conceptions of earthly authority and the calling of Christians in this world, his view of the whole of human life as set within the providential care of God for all his children, not only his Christian children.

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[1] Huss, John, *Tractatus de Ecclesia,* edited by S. H. Thomson (Boulder, Colo.: University of Colorado, 1956), pp. viii-x.

[2] 1955, pp. 72-104.

[3] These will appear in vol. 41 of the new American edition.

[4] Pp. 24-43. See Works of Martin Luther.

When we turn to the cities of Switzerland and South Germany we find another emphasis. Bernd Moeller has recently suggested some of the ways in which the corporate life of these communities may have influenced the thought of the Reformers.[5] We who rightly insist on demythologizing the patriarchal authority of the monarchical episcopate as it developed in the second century must be prepared to do the same for the Presbyterian view and ask how far the more democratic setup in the cities, and the humanist respect for classic parallels, has affected the Swiss interpretation of the New Testament itself. A more mystical view of the church, perhaps due to that conflation of the modern devotion with German mysticism, which is a feature of much fifteenth-century piety of which John Staupitz was but one expression, is to be found in John Oecolampadius, the most learned patristic scholar among the Reformers. For him it is of the essence of the church that it is a union of hearts in the invisible world. The great Protestant disputation at Berne in 1528 offered as one of its attractions, public preachments by half a dozen eminent Reformers, and on this occasion it is typical that Oecolampadius should take as his theme, "Of the Love of Christ for His Church." When we put side by side what William Pauck says of Martin Bucer and what Martin Schmidt says about John

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[5] *Reichstadt and Reformation* (1959).

Wycliffe there are some striking but possibly accidental resemblances. Bucer too begins with a doctrine of election and predestination, Christocentrically conceived. He has a similar ethical interest, the same tendency to legalism. Yet more than any other Reformer, Bucer was at home in Ephesians and Colossians. He had as Strohl says, "a charisma for assimilation," and though he owed much to either Swiss or South German Reformers, there is a good deal in him too of the early Luther.

Oscar Farner in his great work on Zwingli has suggested that Zwingli's doctrine of the Church changed under the impact of his controversy with the Anabaptists in 1528. In his earlier exposition of the "67 articles" and his "True and false religion" he stressed the presence of Christ in his Church as head; and Jacques Courvoisier has lately stressed that this real presence of Christ in and with his whole church is a most important framework, too often ignored, in his Eucharistic doctrine.[6] The doctrine of predestination and election was an important weapon against the Anabaptists, for it cut back behind their debate on the importance of personal conviction, personal experience, and saving faith. Zwingli also has a firm stress on the visible church—which he significantly defined as that of the *kilch horers*—those who are under the word and are under its discipline. In his massive, exhaustive, and rather exhausting biography of Balthasar Hubmaier, Torsten Bergsten shows that Hubmaier kept close to Zwingli in his doctrine of the Church, and was therefore nearer to the Reformers (much as the English Puritan John Tombes is not a Baptist but an Anglican who practiced only adult baptism) than to the Swiss Brethren or the South Germans or the Anabaptists of St. Gall.[7]

The Anabaptists are the great new, exciting field of Reformation studies. There are now masses of new evidence available yet to be assimilated. Franklin Littell in his *Anabaptist View of the Church* properly demanded a retrial of the Anabaptist case.[8] He argued with the engaging brashness of a veritable Perry Mason come to judgment and with rather more bold freedom since his Hamilton Burger and Lieutenant Tragg, in the persons of Melanchthon and Bullinger, have been dead for four centuries. Yet there is some evidence on the other side not to be dismissed as irrelevant and immaterial, and the case presented by Bender and the Mennonite historians is too exuberant not to be modified. Yet we may admit to be proved that it is the doctrine of the Church that lies at the heart of the Anabaptist view in its doctrine of the fall of the church and of hope of the restitution of the Church, in its attitude toward the magistrates and the state; in its opposition to the mixed Church, the *Volkskirche,* or the Established church, there is an anticipation of the Puritan doctrine of the "gathered" church and of the antagonism to the establishment of modern free churches. There is much more to John Calvin than a charisma for assimilation, though it is important that he belonged to a second generation of reformers and that he had important things to say, when we recover from the prejudice caused by the fact that too many Presbyterians treat the Reformation story as summed up in the great watchword *Soli Calvino gloria.* If we sometimes feel that all the interesting things in Calvin have been better said either by Martin Luther before him or by Karl Barth after him, there is still much at which to marvel and admire. No other Reformer has treated the visible Church, which is our mother, with more grandeur or written more solemnly of the ministry and its calling. Those Methodists who are always insisting that ours is a presbyterian view of church polity invariably reveal themselves as holding a much lower view of church and ministry than Calvin's majestic view of the ministerial order and its calling and its place within God's providential order for his Church.

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[6] *Zwingliana* (1960), vol. XI.

[7] *Balthasar Hubmaier* (1961).

[8] Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.

The Anglican divines also belong to the second generation, so that it is remarkable to what extent John Bradford, John Jewell, and Richard Hooker—and even Whitgift—echo the teachings of the Reformers. Obviously then, we cannot simply lump all the Reformers together. Very important are the differences of setting, of time, of emphasis. Rather riskily we can pick out some common notions.

About the question posed by Robert Barnes in 1531, "What the Church is and who be thereof?" there is wide range of agreement. Indeed we might remember that Thomas Aquinas also spoke of the Church as "a congregation of believers" and that the conception of the number of the elect is an integral part of the doctrine of the Mystical Body. But Calvin and Hooker are as insistent as Luther on the inwardness of the Church. "Because a small and contemptible number lieth hid under a huge multitude and a few grains of wheat are covered with a heap of chaff, to God only is to be left the knowledge of his Church, the foundation whereof is his secret election." Hooker said, "The Church of Christ can be but one . . . neither can that one be sensibly discerned by any man, only unto God are they clear and manifest." This does not reduce the Church to a mere notion, however; this is no ecclesiological docetism. "That I have taken the Church to be a spiritual assembly," said Luther, "you have insultingly taken to mean that I would build a church as Plato builds a state that never was."

In perhaps the most important single essay on Luther's doctrine of the Church, Kattenbusch expounded this double element, visible-invisible in Luther's teaching. Quite recently Ernst Kinder in an essay in the *Festgabe fur Joseph Lortz*[9] has shown that in fact Luther used the expression "invisible" seldom and with obvious reserve, that he preferred the expression "hidden" (*abscondita, verborgen*). This hiddenness has a Christological root. As the glory of Christ was hidden in his earthly ministry, so is the Church veiled in infirmities, weakness, and shame. Because of this, its true nature is recognizable only to the eye of faith (*sola fide, perceptibilis*), as we might say, only faith can see that this Cinderella in her rags is *Coram Deo* a bride adorned for her husband. Ernst Rietschel uses the illustration of music, which to a tone deaf person is an unintelligible jumble of sounds, but to one with a musical ear is a coherent melody. "I believe one holy Christian church," said

[9] 1958, I, 173-92.

Luther in 1530, "and so no reason can perceive it, not if everybody were to put on spectacles, for faith is of those things which are not seen." In *Wider Hans Worst* there is the fine sentence: "O it is a high, deep hidden thing is the Church which nobody may perceive and see but only grasp in faith in baptism word and sacrament." This is partly also because human existence is a battle school of faith. "This love of Christ and fellowship with his saints must be hidden, invisible spiritual . . . for were this known to all as earthly communities are known we should not be strengthened and trained thereby to put our trust in the invisible and eternal."

There are remarkable coincidences with this teaching in the English martyr John Bradford. Bradford was the Dietrich Bonhoeffer of the English Reformation, and all that has been saved of his theology are fragments, meditations, and interviews in prison under sentence of death.[10] He was the pupil of Martin Bucer at Cambridge, and he may have been the first eminent English Calvinist. Here are some sentences from his interrogations:

Bp. West: Who can see your church?

Bradford: Those, sir, who have spiritual eyes wherewith they might have discerned Christ's visible presence here on earth. Visible indeed is the Church, but men's blindness is great.

Bp. Heath: You always judge the church.

Bradford: No my lord, as Christ's sheep discern Christ's voice so they discern the church, but do not judge her.

Dr. Harpsfield: Tell me whether the Church is visible or no?

Bradford: Yes, but none otherwise visible than Christ was on earth. We must put on such eyes as good men put on to know Christ when he walked on earth; look therefore as Christ was invisibly known to be Christ when he was on earth; so is the Church known.

Of definitions of the Church, the loveliest is that of Luther in the Schmalkaldic article (1537): "Thank God, a child of seven knows what the church is, the holy believers and the sheep who hear their shepherd's voice." The same polarity of the Word and of faith is to be found in the noble first thesis of the Berne colloquy of 1528: "The Holy Christian Church whose only head is Jesus Christ is born out of the Word of God, and forever abides in that Word nor will it hear the voice of strangers. . . ." In 1530 the famous definition of Augsburg (article vi), that the Church is the congregation of believers where the gospel is purely taught and the sacraments rightly administered, tended to influence all later definitions. Interesting, therefore, is the definition in the curious "Dialogue between a father and his stubborn son" translated by the English exile William Roye but which has recently been shown to have been the early Strassburg catechism of Wolfgang Capito:

Son: What manner of a church is this?

Father: It is a company gathered or assembled together of the true and faithful Christian people which are members of one head by the operation of the Holy Ghost and are fastened in one head, Jesus Christ their Lord.

Dr. E. Payne once asked me if this is the first appearance in English of the phrase "gathered church," but it is perhaps that it simply translates the word "ecclesia."

The Augsburg Confession set out the two great dimensions of the Church, Word, and sacraments. Through Luther the Word became one of the magisterial, still unexhausted conceptions of the Reformation. It marks the living presence of God with his people, that presence of Christ in the Church ruling and directing it which Luther early emphasized against the papal claims, and of which John Jewell affirmed, "We need no man to have the whole superiority in the church—for that Christ is ever present to assist his church and needeth not any man to supply his room." God's Word uses the preaching of the gospel as well as the vehicle of the written scriptures. In the first years of the Reformation the doctrine of Word and Spirit were kept close, but the rift between left and right deepened at this point; first the doctrines of an outer and inner Word fell apart, and then the division hardened into an emphasis on pure doctrine, on the one hand (a recent essay by

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[10] Parker Society, 2 vols.

Lauri Haikola has shown this element to be prominent in Melanchthon's view of the Church), and an increasingly subjective stress on the inner Word, on the other. Nor did the appeal to Scripture mean that the tradition was ignored. In a famous sermon Luther called the Apostle's Creed his "little Bible." The appeal to the old Fathers was an important legacy from Erasmian humanism, and here a turning point may have been the debate with the Anabaptists, or the decision at Berne in 1528 that the notaries in the great colloquy should register only arguments taken from the Bible.

I cannot begin to expound the doctrine of the sacraments from Luther's fundamental insistence on the religion of Incarnation, as always mediated to sinful men by signs, or the spiritualism of the Swiss Reformers and the Anabaptists. All the Reformers insisted that Scripture contained sufficient truth for salvation, but on the scope of Scripture there was an important difference between Reformers and radicals, between those who found in the Bible a blueprint for church order and those who felt that ecclesiastical polity lay within the realm of Christian liberty wherein the Church has authority. Cranmer, in his perceptive letter to the Council in 1552 protesting against the Black Rubric, saw the difference here to be fundamental. The doctrine that we may only do what is explicitly commanded in Scripture he declared to be the very root of the sectaries. Hooker was true to Cranmer when he declared, "Sundry things may be lawfully done in the church so they be not against the Scriptures although no Scripture doth command them, but the church only following the light of reason may judge them to be in discretion meet."

Word, sacraments—then emerged a third dimension, "the discipline of Christ." There was a problem here. If the true church be inward, known only to God, how can fellowship and discipline between Christians be possible?

The problem was solved by a kind of theological gimmick. In his "Bondage of the Will" (1525) Luther distinguished between the rule of faith and the rule of love. "I call the saints the church of God, not by the rule of faith, but by the rule of love. For love is eager to believe the best and hopeth all things . . . and calls a baptized person one of the saints." Bucer extended this thought when he said that by an act of charity we might presume those to be of the Church "who were baptized, who professed the Christian faith, and who walked in godliness." This thought was taken up again by Calvin. "Because the certainty of faith was not necessary, God hath put in place thereof a certain judgment of charity whereby we should acknowledge for members of the church those that with confession of faith and with example of life and with partaking of the sacraments do profess the same God and Christ with us." Zwingli's view of a Christian commonwealth as a prophetic community led him to entrust large powers of discipline to the godly magistrate. His friend Oecolampadius was aware of the dangers of this, and in his great oration to the Basel Synod 1529 he put forward a blueprint for Christian discipline in which laymen and clergy joined together in exercising pastoral care. This was extended by Bucer with a wider use of the power of these lay churchwardens, while his contacts with the Anabaptists led him to experiment with smaller Christian cells, fellowships which did not very long endure. Calvin carried the development of church discipline to a further stage though it is noteworthy that he does not in the Institutes—as does the Scots Confession—reckon the administration of the discipline of Christ as a third dimension to be added to Word and sacrament. Word and sacrament remain paramount for him.

Here was a great dividing line between the Reformers and the radicals. While the Reformers generally accepted the Augustinian view of the visible church as a mixed body in which tares grow along with the wheat, the Anabaptists attempted to frame a pure, gathered church in which a strict discipline was exercised over the godly.

Franklin Littell has stressed the importance for the Anabaptists of a notion of the fall of the Church, of the corruption of primitive Christianity. But of necessity all the Reformers held that corruption had entered the Church. They differed in their pin-pointing of it. Those two extremists Sebastian Franck and his friend Campanus, who in the long march of the Church militant down the centuries regarded themselves as the only two in step, put the degeneration very early, in the title of Campanus' now lost tract "Against all the world from the time of the Apostles." On the eve of the Reformation Lucas of Prague put the fall in the time of Pope Sylvester. Thomas Müntzer drew from Hegesippus in Eusebius a strange doctrine of a fall at the end of the sub-apostolic age. Others, like George Witzel, put it as late as the fifth, sixth, or even the eighth or ninth centuries. It was not only the radicals who consciously sought to regain the primitive Church, however. It was the marrow of John Jewell's apology to insist that "we have returned again unto the primitive church of the ancient fathers and apostles . . . the very head springs and foundations of the church." "We are the true, primitive church," said Luther again and again, "and the old former church shines forth again now as the sun from the clouds behind which it was shining all the time but not clearly." Richard Hooker said: "They ask us where our Church did lurk? In what cave of the earth it slept for so many hundreds of years together before the birth of Martin Luther? As if we were of the opinion that Luther did erect a new church of Christ. No, the Church of Christ which was from the beginning, is, and continueth unto the end."

The Reformers pressed home the consequences of viewing the Church as the New Israel. In the pamphlet dogfight between Karl Stadt and John Eck in 1519 there is an interesting and revealing aside in which Eck said that properly speaking the Church cannot repent and cannot sin, for it is the Body of Christ. The Reformers treated the sin of the New Israel more ruthlessly and in the same language with which the prophets had arraigned the old. They really faced the question of what happens when the New Israel also rebels, denies, disobeys, forsakes, and what shall be done in the end thereof? "I put the case," said John Jewell, "what if an idol be set up in the Church of God?" Then he added, "What if some thief or pirate invade and possess Noah's Ark?" That is a striking figure, Noah's Ark flying the skull and crossbones, the Jolly Roger. Here is a great matter for the Reformers, the battle between the two cities, the elect and the reprobate, the true and the false church, which do not simply co-exist, but are in tension and conflict in a dynamism which runs through the whole of church history and gives it an apocalyptic character. This is what the forthright Scots Confession calls "the Kirk Malignant"—it is a thing requisite that the true Kirk be discerned from the filthy synagogue, the horrible harlot, "the Kirk Malignant." The Reformers did not generally completely unchurch Rome or utterly equate the false church with the papacy. Luther drew on Augustine's doctrine of the two cities going back to Cain and Abel. Other Reformers drew on the book of Daniel for an interpretation of Christian history. Vadianus of St. Gall, in a kind of Toynbee-like study of human history, distinguished four ages of the Church. Martin Bucer similarly discussed the "times of the Church" in his *De Regno Christ;* while John Foxe in England and Glaccius Ullyricus in the *Magdeburg Centuries* saw history as the rise and fall of anti-Christ. Yet there is no ultimate dualism here, no pessimism, for there is the thought of the victorious presence of the risen Lord of the Church at God's right hand, who has shed forth the Spirit and who shall come again. Thus the doctrine of the Word emphasizes the leadership of God, the creative newness within the Israel of God leading his people into new truths, new insights, new deeds. Luther said:

> Even if it were the highest novelty, since it is the Word who is giving orders, what matters is not the novelty but the majesty of the Word. For what I ask is not new that faith does. Was it not a new thing when the apostolic ministry was instituted? Was it not new when Abraham offered his son? Was it not new when Israel crossed the Red Sea? Will it not be a new thing when I pass from death to life? But in all these things it is not the newness but the Word of God which counts.

I daresay much of this chapter must seem irrelevant to many of you to the plight of Methodism and the ecumenical situation. I rather hope so. Church history has nothing to teach us if we rush into it with our own questions and ask things about which we are concerned, but which were not so important in a past age. Only when we sit down first and listen to the men of the past talking among themselves, minding their own business; listen to their questions; glimpse a little of their proportions; do we find that, after all, there are some clues, some things written for our examples.

One day in the last century, two old men sat together on a park bench in the city of Birmingham. The one was a Methodist supernumerary (I have the story from his grandson). The other was John Henry Cardinal Newman. They talked about what the church is and who be thereof. Newman took the other's umbrella and poked in the dust a circle on the ground and said, "I think you have to get the circumference right." The old Methodist took his umbrella back and poked a single hole in the center and said, "Ah, we think that you must begin with the center, and if you get that right the circumference will look after itself." Well, it is an apocryphal and perhaps implausible tale but it may have a truth about Protestantism, and perhaps about Methodism too. It may be that the Church is more like a ray of light than a box with tidy edges. I suspect that every ecclesiology at some point blurs those edges, that eschatology interrupts every attempt to define and guard the Christian circumference. The Reformers were surely right in returning to the center, of beginning *Coram Deo,* with God who is revealed in the Incarnate Son, hidden in his humiliation and suffering but risen and exalted—and hidden after another fashion until the appearance of his glory. When John Knox was dying his wife asked him what passage she should read to him from Holy Scripture. "You know," he said, "the place where my soul first cast its anchor." She turned to John 17, to the theme of Christ's priestly office, his intercession for his Church and for his world. In the end, more fundamental than the question, What is the Church and who be thereof? is the theme "Of the Love of Christ for His Church." Somewhere there too the ecumenical movement must learn to cast the anchor of its hope.

5

Baptism and the Family of God

ROBERT E. CUSHMAN

Present-day Confusion

The promptness with which baptism in the name of Jesus[1] assumed a central place in the worship of the primitive Church is a historical fact that the average Protestant Christian today is, I fear, about equally unprepared to take in or, unhappily, to trouble himself about. It seems evident that for hosts of Protestant people —both lay and clerical, at least in the American churches—baptism survives as a solemn but nearly unintelligible rite persisting by the inertia of unassailable, because immemorial, tradition. Excluding the Baptists—for whom "believer's baptism" is ordinarily the visible sign of grace unto repentance on the one hand and public profession of faith on the other—evangelical churchmen as I know them scarcely conceal mild embarrassment in their practice of adult

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[1] See Acts 2:38; 19:5; I Cor. 1:13. Cf. W.F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1948), p. 38.