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THE RELATION OF THE REFORMATION

TO

THE CENTRAL IDEA OF RELIGION

by

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A THESIS

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To  
the Memory of

JAMES COFFIN STOUT  
1869-1930

Friend--Teacher  
Who was "Valiant for Truth"  
Who made Church History  
Live for his Students  
and  
Whose Guidance in this Study  
was  
A Constant Inspiration  
This Thesis is Gratefully  
Dedicated

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**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

THE RELATION OF THE REFORMATION  
TO THE  
CENTRAL IDEA OF RELIGION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject.

1. The Subject Stated and Delimited.

One of the greatest of Protestant Church historians has spoken as follows of the movement which is to be considered in this study: "The Reformation of the sixteenth century is, next to the introduction of Christianity, the greatest event in history. It marks the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times..... The age of the Reformation bears a strong resemblance to the first century. Both are rich beyond any other period in great and good men, important facts, and permanent results. Both contain the ripe fruits of preceding, and the fruitful germs of succeeding ages."(1)

In a recent book on "Religion" the writer in the opening sentence of the preface writes: "A striking feature of contemporary thought is the widespread awakening of interest in the deeper questions of religion."(2)

(1) P. Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. VI,  
p. 1.

(2) E. S. Ames: Religion, New York, 1929.

The subject of this study is first a study in the field of religion to get at those deeper elements, those essential factors or an essential factor, or as stated in the title, the Central Idea of Religion. With this central idea of religion before us it is the purpose of the writer to study that great religious movement, the Protestant Reformation, to see whether it was a movement which had at its heart and which was endeavoring to recover for the people, that which is the very heart of religion. Briefly stated, then, it is a study of the Reformation in relation to the central idea of religion.

Within the scope of this study it will not be possible to include a detailed discussion of the causes and conditions leading to that movement of the sixteenth century which wrought such great changes in the world and left it permanently changed. Yet it will be helpful to take at least a summary view of them for the light that they may throw upon the main period under discussion.

Again, in the treatment of this movement we shall confine ourselves to those who were outstanding as leaders, taking them as representative of the movement for which they were in large measure responsible and influential. It would only add unnecessary details to enter upon a consideration of the lives and experiences of the many others who also shared the responsi-



bility for the Reformation, although they would perhaps make a like contribution to this study.

Moreover, it is aside from the purpose of this study to enter upon a consideration of the lives and experiences of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli in any way other than that required by the specific purpose of this thesis. To write another account of the lives of these men is not our goal; it is, rather, to study their lives in the light of the basic principle which we find at the heart of religion.

Neither shall the post-Reformation period be included, except as it may be necessary to refer to it as bearing out the conclusions reached in the treatment of the Reformation period itself.

In the first part of this study concerning the central idea of religion the method of procedure will not endeavor to include a detailed discussion of the many opinions on the subject of religion. Neither is it a part of our plan to include an extended treatment of even the leading religions of the present world. In view of the main purpose of this thesis which is to see whether the Reformation was essentially a movement which had at its heart that which is the heart of religion, the second part of this study assumes the place of greater importance. In the first part by a more cursory method we hope to establish an adequate standard by

which the Reformation may be judged. In other words it seeks to answer the question, what is the central idea of religion?

## 2. The Subject Explained and Justified.

In case it is not altogether clear as to what the problem is when we undertake to study the "relation of the Reformation to the central idea of religion", we believe that it will be better understood as the method of procedure is set forth, and as we enter upon the process.

But why undertake such a study as this? Is it of particular importance to try to see whether the Reformation has in it that which is central in religion? What is the occasion for the consideration of this topic? These questions cannot but stir our interest and sharpen our desire to enter upon the task.

To answer the above questions: in short, it is because there are those who say that the Reformation made no permanent contribution to religion, that it has been outgrown, that a "new reformation" is needed. We read such statements as this: "A crisis confronts religion in the modern world. A New Reformation is necessary within the Christian Church, if it is to survive, besides which the Protestant Reformation will seem insignificant."<sup>(1)</sup> Is it true, as Brewster has been so

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(1) Ellwood: Reconstruction of Religion, p.1.

bold as to say, that "The Protestant Reformation proved only a false dawn, and the whole job has to be done over again from the bottom"?(1) Again, what about those who under the name of "modern science, modern history, and modern philosophy", say that the Church of the "second reformation" will "fling away the hoarded treasures of old rubbish with which her sanctuary is now encumbered, and put in their place the newest treasures that the world of modern learning has to offer"?(2) Another writer says that the members of this New Church "will not be required to leave their brains in pawn when they enter its portals".(3) Did the Protestant Reformation accomplish anything more worthwhile than to release men from the priests and to deliver them over to the theologians, as the same writer alleges?(4)

Or, contrary to the opinions quoted above, did the Protestant Reformation recover for the world that freedom of access to the streams of living, vital, personal fellowship with the Eternal God for which the hearts of all mankind are ever longing and seeking? Is it true that the "Reformers were men who were supremely concerned for the salvation of the soul, for the glory of Christ and the triumph of his gospel"?(5) Did the

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- (1) E.T. Brewster: An Understanding of Religion, p.130.
- (2) J.H. Holmes: Religion for today, pp. 48 ff.
- (3) Wm. A. Vrooman: Progressive Christianity, p.143.
- (4) Ibid., p. 148.
- (5) P. Schaff: History of the Christian Church, VI, p.15.

Reformation remove the "obstructions which the papal church had interposed between Christ and the believer"? Did it "open the door to direct union with Him as the only Mediator between God and man", and make his gospel accessible to every reader without the permission of a priest? Was it a return to first principles and thus a great advance? Was it a "revival of primitive Christianity, and at the same time a deeper apprehension and application of it than had been known before"? (1) The same writer says: "The ultimate aim of evangelical Protestantism is to bring every man into living union with Christ as the only and all-sufficient Lord and Saviour from sin and death." (2) Is this in accord with that which is at the very heart of religion, that which the souls of men have been longing for throughout all ages--fellowship with God?

This is something of the significance of this study. Its importance cannot but make itself felt. If there is that upon which men can agree as the essence, the heart, or center of religion, that which gives religion its value and makes for its permanency, then we shall search the records of the Reformation period, study the lives of its leaders, observe the expressions

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(1) Schaff, Vol. VI, pp. 15, 16.

(2) Ibid., p. 16.

coming from its councils, and consider the type of life it produced to see whether or not the center of that movement had to do with that which is central in religion. If it did not, then surely it is only temporary in its contribution; if it did, it is of permanent value and we have not yet consumed its fruits. It bids fair to continue to hold a place in life because it is able to bring satisfaction to the religious needs of men.

#### B. The Sources for the Study.

The first part of our discussion dealing with the central idea of religion, will seek its foundation in modern psychology and philosophy. Added to this will be the history of religions and particularly the Christian religion. While making no claim to a complete setting forth of the evidence or arguments of these fields of study we shall endeavor to summarize them with respect to that which they suggest as the essence of religion.

The second part of the study is based upon the documents of the Reformation period itself, and the writings of the Reformers, particularly Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin. The lives of these men will be drawn upon as sources of evidence. Likewise the more formal expressions of Reformation thinking as set forth in the creedal and confessional statements

will be studied for their contribution with regard to that which was central in the Reformation.

### C. The Plan of Procedure.

In our discussion of the subject, its statement and explanation, the method of procedure has already been hinted. In the first place, through a summary study of the conclusions of the psychology and philosophy of religion, and by a similar treatment of historic Christianity in particular, we shall endeavor to determine whether there is that which is the central idea in religion, that which is its very heart, being basic and essential in order that religion be permanent in its ability to satisfy man's needs. If there is such a central element, then what is it?

From this general and summery study of religion we shall turn to a more specific and searching consideration of the Protestant Reformation with a similar purpose: to see if there was in it a controlling central idea, a basic contribution or an essential principle, and if so, what it was.

The concluding section shall be devoted to a consideration of the first two parts in relation to one another; to see whether or not, according as the evidence warrants, that which is the central idea of religion was also the very heart of the Reformation.

If it be true, then the Reformation was a movement along lines which are permanent and it was not a passing disturbance in the course of man's religious development. As W.Boyd Carpenter has said: "We may be sure that the only religion which has a chance of survival is that which meets the essential religious demands of his being."(1)

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(1)Carpenter: The Permanent Elements of Religion, p.18.

PART I  
THE CENTRAL IDEA OF RELIGION

CHAPTER II  
THE CENTRAL IDEA OF RELIGION DEFINED



## PART I

### THE CENTRAL IDEA OF RELIGION

#### CHAPTER II

#### THE CENTRAL IDEA OF RELIGION DEFINED

##### A. Introduction.

##### 1. The Universality of Religion.

It may be well to make clear one or two points before giving and following out the plan of this chapter.

A consideration by no means irrelevant to the purpose of this chapter is that of the universality of religion. If there are those who think that religion is only an obsession of the ignorant, the reactionaries, the weak-willed; that it is foisted on the masses by a cult of priests who have taken advantage of the people; that mankind has become a victim of its own stupid imaginings; that religion has no place in the lives of those who are really intellectually free and who are abreast of their times in their study of science, psychology, history, and philosophy; and take the stand that it is not inherent in man's nature but "an arbitrary product of the soul";--then they have an extremely difficult task before them to produce evidence in support of such a position. But, in fact, there is a great abundance of evidence to the contrary. Religion

appears to be a natural and normal part of human life.

One writer states: "As far back as history and archaeology are able to penetrate into the dim beginnings of human life man had a religion."(1)

Professor Max Müller wrote: "I maintain that religion, so far from being impossible, is inevitable, if only we are left in possession of our senses."(2)

Another has written: "So far as I can judge from the immense mass of accessible evidence, we have to admit that the belief in spiritual beings appears among all low races with whom we have attained to thoroughly intimate acquaintance."(3)

Professor Tiele maintains: "The statement that there are nations or tribes which possess no religion rests either on inaccurate observations, or on a confusion of ideas. No tribe or nation has yet been met with destitute of belief in any higher beings, and travelers who asserted their existence have been afterwards refuted by facts. It is legitimate, therefore, to call religion, in its more general sense, an universal phenomenon of humanity."(4)

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(1) E.D. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p.11.

(2) Max Müller: Origin of Religion, p.32.

(3) E.B. Tylor: Primitive Culture, p. 384.

(4) Tiele: Outlines of Religion, p.6. Gaebelien in his "Christianity or Religion?" cites an interesting case (pp. 13-14): "In 1845 certain Catholic missionaries went to Western Australia to establish Christian missions there. They took great pains to ascertain the religious sentiments of the savages, and

The positivist Dr. Gruppe, has declared that religion is a comparatively recent invention. But Gaebelein answers: "Modern discoveries leading closer and closer to the cradle history of the race, the discoveries made in Assyria and Egypt, prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that religion is not a new invention, but as old as the human race itself. It is, if not as old as the world, at least as old as the world we know. As soon as we know anything of the thoughts and feelings of man, we find him in possession of religion, or rather possessed by religion."(1)

. . . . .

for a long time they seem to have been unable to discover even the faintest traces of anything that could be called religious worship. After three years of mission life, the leader of these missionaries declared that the natives did not adore anything in the form of a deity, true or false. Yet he found out that they had a religious conviction, that they believed in an Omnipotent Being, Creator of heaven and earth, whom they call Motogon, and whom they imagined as a very tall, powerful and wise man. His mode of creation was by breathing. To create the earth he said, 'Earth, come forth!' and he breathed, and the earth was created. And in the same manner he created the sun, the trees, and animals. They also believed in a being whom they called Cienga, the author of evil. This latter being is the unchainer of the whirlwind and the storm, and the invisible author of the death of their children, wherefore these natives feared him exceedingly."

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(1)Gaebelein: Christianity or Religion? p. 14.

Soper in a careful survey of the evidence on this point tells us that, "About half a century ago Sir John Lubbock, in his volume Prehistoric Times, attempted to show that religion was not universal, that there were tribes of men scattered fairly widely over the earth which had no religion, no worship, no belief in higher powers with whom they were related.....The conclusion reached by Professor Flint (in answer to Lubbock) was this: 'An impartial examination of the relevant facts, it appears to me, shows that religion is virtually universal.' Such a claim as that of Sir John Lubbock is no longer made. Not only has the careful study of savages led to a deeper understanding of their life, but psychology has been developing as a science by leaps and bounds, and has made almost unnecessary any further investigation among savages themselves to determine the fundamental question of the essential religious nature of man. But even before this development had more than begun, Professor Flint had sensed the conclusions reached by psychology in a more recent time and declared that 'the world has been so framed, and the mind so constituted, that man, even in his lowest estate, and all over the world, gives evidence of possessing religious perceptions and emotions'.....The study of human nature gives abundant proof that man is normally religious, that religion is

an experience which man inevitably possesses as soon as his life begins to be organized and enters into relationship with his fellows and the nature which surrounds him on all sides. We are dealing, then, with what is a universal phenomenon."(1)

Therefore, as far as this thesis is concerned, it is assumed that "Religion is essentially natural with man, in the profoundest and most comprehensive meaning of the words", as Ladd says in his Philosophy of Religion. He continues: "As long as man remains man, he will have religion--will, so to say, make religion for himself.....He must indeed be a shallow or a credulous student of religion from the psychological point of view who can persuade himself that the coming years are going so to disentangle and detach the interwoven threads of man's mental and social reactions as to let escape the religious nature and still leave human nature essentially the same."(2)

Thus if "religion is universal", if "it is not an arbitrary product of the soul", if "it is in-

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(1) Soper: The Religions of Mankind, pp. 26-27.

(2) Ladd, G.T.: Philosophy of Religion, Vol. II, p. 461.

Cf. Orr in his Christian View of God and the World, p. 135. He says: "Religion is not an arbitrary product of the soul. Even in the lowest and poorest religions, we see something struggling into consciousness, --a want, a desire, a need, --which is not measured by the extent of its actual knowledge of the Divine."

herent in man's nature", and "essentially natural with man", there must be something about it that strikes a peculiar chord in man's response; it must mark an inherent need in man's nature, there must be something which man longs for and seeks after, which his very nature demands and remains unsatisfied until it has been found.

This suggests another very relevant question which we shall not attempt to answer at this point, but which will be considered in the course of our study, and which in fact, underlies it: Are there not very marked differences among the various religions of the world in their ability to satisfy this religious need of man? Or stating the question from the standpoint of the psychologist, What is it that religion must supply to meet this need of man? What is the really significant, the essential thing, or the central idea of religion? This question we shall try to answer in the present chapter. The former one will be considered in the chapter following.

## 2. The Plan of the Chapter.

It is not within the scope of our study to enter into an extended treatment of the many opinions that have been advanced by the many writers on the subject of what religion is; but we shall endeavor to include a representative group of statements showing

how there are those which are one-sided and partial and on the other hand those which tend to point to certain common elements and agree on certain essentials. It is our purpose to reach as complete and as balanced a view as possible. It is not our purpose to formulate another definition, however, for there are said to be already ten thousand definitions of religion! We shall present a number of them and seek to evaluate that which seems to be central in them. This should be true to a degree in all religions. Soper in undertaking the problem of defining religion says: "Religions differ greatly, as we shall see, but there must be some element or elements which all the religions have in common, or no definition is possible. The common element or elements must be distinctive of religion, so that we may be able to trace the development of this one thing through the maze of the forms it has assumed."(1)

#### B. Definitions of Religion.

##### 1. Definitions which Disparage Religion.

Salomon Reinach writes: "I propose to define religion as: a sum of scruples which impede the free exercise of our faculties."(2) Guiseppe Sergi says:

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(1) Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 18.

(2) Orpheus: A General History of Religions, Eng. Trans., p.3.

"Religion is a pathological manifestation of the protective function, a deviation caused by ignorance of natural causes and their effects."(1) Havelock Ellis writes: "Now and again we must draw a deep breath of relief, and that is religion."(2) Soper's estimate of the first two of these definitions applies to all of their kind: "These definitions lack the fundamental requirement of a definition, they do not spring from any real insight into the meaning of what they are attempting to define. Such insight can come only as a result of sympathetic investigation of religious beliefs and practices, and this is sadly lacking in the case of these scholars. A student must understand before he defines, and to understand religion he must view it from within, feeling at home amid the factors which make up the complex thing we know by that name."  
(3)

## 2. Definitions which Restrict Religion to the Intellect.

Hegel is quoted as having defined religion as "the Divine Spirit's knowledge of itself through the mediation of finite spirit."(4) Professor E.B.Tylor

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- (1) Les Emotions, p. 404; Cf. Soper, p.19.
- (2) Quoted by Harry Emerson Fosdick in an article "What is Religion?", Harpers Magazine, March 1929, p.424.
- (3) Soper, p. 19.
- (4) Quoted by Soper, p. 20.



has a very simple statement: "The minimum definition of religion is the belief in spiritual beings."(1) Both of these definitions appear to reduce religion to a matter of belief, to an intellectual attitude and to omit certain things which as we shall see certainly are essential.(2)

### 3. Definitions in Terms of Emotion.

One of the most famous is that of Schleiermacher: "The essence of the religious emotions consists in the feeling of an absolute dependence."(3) Goethe has briefly defined it: "Religion is a feeling for what is above, around and beneath us."(4) Teichmüller says: "Religion consists of fear, of aesthetic feelings, such as admiration for the beautiful, and of moral feelings."(5) Professor John McTaggart has a similar definition: "It seems to me that religion may best be described as an emotion, resting on a conviction of harmony between ourselves and the universe at large."(6) But these definitions we believe can be only partial in the light of the evidence which shall follow.

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{1} E.B. Tylor: Primitive Culture, Vol. I, p. 383.

{2} Cf. Soper, p. 20.

{3} Ibid., p. 21. Cf. also William A. Brown: The Essence of Christianity, p. 161.

{4} A.C. Gaebelein: Christianity or Religion? p. 7.

{5} In "Der Christliche Glaube", p. 5; Cf. Gaebelein, p. 8.

{6} John McTaggart: Some Dogmas of Religion, p. 3.

#### 4. Definitions in Terms of Morality.

Such a definition is that of Immanuel Kant: "Religion is morality. We possess religion when we look upon all our moral duties as divine commands."(1) Another which emphasized this point, but is more inclusive, is that of Fichte: "It is conscious morality which, in virtue of that consciousness, is mindful of its origin from God."(2) Matthew Arnold emphasizes the same side of religion: "Religion is morality touched by emotion."(3) Yet as we shall see later, we are compelled to take the position that these are all partial and incomplete.(4)

#### 5. Recent Definitions with a Social Emphasis.

Ellwood accepts the definition: "Religion is man's attitude toward the universe regarded as a social and ethical force."(5) E.S. Ames has this definition: "Religion is the consciousness of the highest social values."(6) George Bernard Shaw's might be included in this group: "Religion is that which binds men to one another, and irreligion that which sunders."(7) An-

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- (1) Quoted by Gaebelin, p.7.
- (2) Ibid., p.7.
- (3) Matthew Arnold: Literature and Dogma, p.46.
- (4) See Soper, p.22; see Gaebelin, p.9.
- (5) Ellwood: Reconstruction of Religion, pp.46-47.
- (6) E.S. Ames: Psychology of Religious Experience, p.vii.
- (7) Quoted by Fosdick: Harpers Magazine, March 1929, p.424.

other gives this statement: "Religion...is sharing with some worshipping group the experience of that divine purpose of righteousness and love which gives meaning to life as a whole, and a consequent experience of growing competence to meet life as a total situation."(1) Professor Wright offers another: "The genius of religion is the endeavor to secure the conservation of socially recognized values."(2) Again we must feel that these definitions are inadequate for reasons which will be made plain as we proceed.

#### 6. Definitions which Omit Reference to Higher Powers or to God.

Some of the definitions already presented above, such as those of Ames, Wright, Arnold, Teichmüller, Weinach, and Sergi might be included in this group. We might add such others as those of Professor Hoffding: "The conservation of value is the characteristic axiom of religion"(3); and Professor Coe who speaks of "religion as an immanent movement within our valuations, a movement that does not terminate in any single set of thought contents, or in any set of par-

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(1) Theodore Gerald Soares: Religious Education, p.xvi.  
(2) Quoted by Soper, p.22.  
(3) Hoffding: Philosophy of Religion, p.10.

ticular values".(1) In another place Coe says, "Any reaction may then be considered as religious to the extent that it seeks 'life' in the sense of completion, unification, and conservation of values--any values whatever".(2) Ames in a more recent book on "Religion" says: "Religion is the quest for the largest and the fullest satisfaction of felt needs.....Religion is this outstretching for the satisfaction of felt needs, and its expression in objects and ceremonials associated with these needs. It cannot be identified with any one set or system of needs nor with any particular objects or ceremonials."(3) Professor Haydon exalts religion as "the co-operative quest for a completely satisfying life."(4) But here again there is a falling short that renders these definitions vitally defective.

#### 7. Definitions which more nearly Represent the Central Idea of Religion.

Of course it is a fair question to ask: By what standard do you judge these definitions, for what reason do you chose one group and not another, how has one the right to say that one group of definitions re-

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(1)Coe: Psychology of Religion, p. 72.

(2)Ibid., p.70.

(3)Ames: Religion, p.9.

(4)Quoted by Fosdick: Harpers Magazine, March 1929, p. 424.

veals that which is true religion or the essence of religion and that another group does not? As stated at the outset it is hardly within the scope of this study which is intended primarily to be a study of the Reformation, to go into a full treatment of such a problem as these questions suggest. Nevertheless we shall state briefly our position on the matter.

In the first place, in view of the fact of the universality of religion, there is something which the very nature of man demands and for which all men alike at some time and in some way show a need. Is it not a reasonable conclusion that there is some essential element in religion and also, that in varying degrees it is common to all religions? As we shall try to show in the next chapter, the value of any religion is determined by its ability to fulfil this need in man's life and to supply the essential factor. This does not mean to say that there is no truth in some religions, nor is it intended to say that all religions are true. There may be much that is true and much that is false in many of the forms of religion that are to be found. But this much may be said, that underlying all, the need for religion is to be found among all men; and more than that, every group has made some effort to find that which will satisfy their need. The definitions thus far given appear to have no element in common and are not in harmony with the need that we have found to be inherent

in man.

In the second place, on the basis of the psychological evidence at hand today some of them are not even relevant, others are inaccurate, and all of them are inadequate. Of course there is a sense in which no definition is adequate; but those given thus far do not measure up to the testimony of those who have been the great religious men and women throughout the ages, much less to the evidence amassed by psychology. We shall have more to say on this point in the next chapter.

We believe that the best justification for our method and our position will be in allowing the following definitions to speak for themselves. They represent the researches and conclusions of leading scholars in this field. The contexts from which they come are rich in evidence in support of them. We shall therefore, proceed to set forth an extended list of such definitions which it is believed will speak for themselves, and from them will be found to arise a consensus of opinion which will be acceptable.

Schleiermacher's definition has already been referred to. Although inadequate, it is referred to again because of the influence of that scholar upon the works of those who have followed him. Kenneth Edward calls us to note that "almost all the most fruitful discussion of the nature of religion from his day to

our own is directly or indirectly inspired by Schleiermacher".(1) Schleiermacher's full statement is as follows: "The common element in all the varied utterances of religion, that which immediately differentiates it from all other feelings and constitutes the invariable essence of religion is that in it we are conscious of our absolute dependence, or in other words, of our relation with God."(2) We note that this dependence is upon God.

There are those who define religion in terms of worship. Professor Allan Menzies states it thus: "Religion is the worship of higher powers from a sense of need."(3) A.S.Geden comes to this conclusion: "On the whole, then, it would seem that the essential quality or nature of religion is best described as consisting in worship."(4) Auguste Sabatier has written: "Prayer is religion in act--that is to say, real religion."(5)

Soper says of Max Müller that he "cut the Gordian knot by saying that it was man's 'sense of the infinite' which accounts for the possibility of the rise of religion in his soul. This has been severely

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- (1) K. Edward: Religious Experience: Its Nature and Its Truth, p. 14.
- (2) Glaubenslehre, Article 4. See Edward, pp.7-8.
- (3) Allan Menzies: History of Religion, p.13.
- (4) A.S.Geden: Studies in the Religions of the East, p.53.
- (5) Auguste Sabatier: Outlines of Philosophy of Religion, p.27.

criticized by many writers, but, after all, it is one way of stating that in man there is that which answers to the voice from without and which in the end results in religion. It points to that mysterious something which makes man reach out beyond the seen to the invisible world of which he is dimly conscious."(1)

Whitehead defines religion: "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness. It runs through three stages, if it evolves to its final satisfaction. It is the transition from God the void to God the enemy, and from God the enemy to God the companion."  
(2)

S.H.Kellogg says: "Religion essentially consists in man's apprehension of his relation to an invisible Power or powers, able to influence his destiny, to which he is necessarily subject, together with the feelings, desires, and actions, which this apprehension calls forth."(3)

The statement of Carpenter in his "Permanent

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- (1) Soper, p.36. He goes on to say: "We may not believe in a primitive revelation in the sense that it consisted of a number of religious ideas placed in the mind of primitive man, but it is a very different matter to believe that man's religious nature, his religious proclivity, is the gift of God, a part of his original endowment, without which, whatever nature or society might have done, religion would never have developed."  
(2) Whitehead: Religion in the Making, p.16.  
(3) S.H.Kellogg: The Genesis and Growth of Religion, p.21.



Elements of Religion" is especially to be noted: "Dependence, Fellowship, Progress--these are the three features which we believe to be essential to religion, if it is to prove a permanent power in the world."(1) In his Introduction(2) he has already said concerning these three: "...None of these can be satisfied except on the supposition of the truth and reality of the object of worship. To resolve this into a mere ideal is to destroy the basis of religion. Unless man feels that he yields allegiance or submission to some Real Power greater than self, he has no religion in the true sense."(3)

Carpenter also takes the three "universal religions", Islamism, Buddhism, and Christianity and shows how as these essential elements were present,

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(1) Carpenter: The Permanent Elements in Religion, p.21.

(2) Ibid., p.xlv.

(3) Concerning the element of Dependence, Carpenter says: (pp. 63-64) "The ancient mythologies are clear on this point. The needs of man led him to look upward to the heavenly powers. The forces of nature were in the hands of great Beings on whose bounty man depended. The rain must be implored. The tempest and the fire must be deprecated. The gods must be propitiated. Man's earliest religious feelings are often the pathetic expression of his sense of Dependence on powers greater than himself." Again he says (p.65): "The element of Dependence enters into all early religions. Can we as readily find among them the element of Fellowship? Turn to India alone. The Brahman Pantheism taught that nature was the manifestation of God, and that man must blend himself with Him or it. This expresses the strong yearning for fellowship with the Divine." Carpenter illustrates his position by the Mexican religion also. (See pp. 66-70)

they met the religious demands of man's being and were of permanent value, but as they fell short in the essential elements they failed to satisfy man's religious needs. With regard to Islamism he declares: "When we come to the wider question, and ask whether Islamism possesses those elements which will qualify her to stand the crisis of the future, and to emerge from its trials as a religion fitted to guide the future of humanity, to satisfy the demands of man's heart, and to be considered universal in gift and quality, we are bound to answer 'No'. 'It can teach man reverence and service. It can meet his instinct of dependence; but to minister to the higher needs of man, it is powerless.' For the spirit of man, when it cries aloud in its agony, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to his seat!' (Job 13:3) Islam has no answer. For the cry of him who asks that our fair world with all its beauty shall be regarded as a thing growing up under the inspiring hand of God, Islam has no sympathy. It is like one of those countries in which the verdure is luxuriant, the flowers are of glorious colors, and the birds soar over our heads resplendent in plumage and majestic in flight; but where the flowers lack fragrance, where the birds lack song, and where the homes of men are not. The mirage-fever of the desert is upon us; we dream of water, we wake to thirst; we think of

shelter, and we wake to yearn for the shadow of a rock in the weary land. Such faith can never be universal; it provides for Dependence, but not for Progress, and it supplies no link of Fellowship between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God who made him."(1)

Concerning Buddhism the same author concludes: "Buddhism is not the religion of progress, if, as Oldenberg tells us, it has no message for the classes which most need upward help and encouraging impulse:--'For the lower order of the people, for those born to toil in manual labour, hardened by the struggle for existence, the announcement of the connection of misery with all forms of existence was not made.....Very unlike(was) the word of that Man who suffered 'little children to come unto Him, for of such is the kingdom of God'. For children and those who are like children, the arms of Buddha are not opened'.....Hence we see that Fellowship, as a scanty thing, robbed of its joy and personal communion, may be found in Buddhism; but of Dependence upon any but self, there is none; while Progress towards a goal of gladness and fuller life is outside its range. This religion, so beautiful and so sad, cannot therefore wholly satisfy man."(2)

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(1) Carpenter, p. 144-145.  
(2) Ibid., p. 153-154.

Are the three elements in Christianity? Carpenter answers: "They are all here. Dependence: for God is love, and mercy is His attribute; Fellowship: for He has identified Himself with human sorrow; Progress: for the advance of the world and the development of all its beauty and glory, its present culture and future power, are but expressions of Divine life and energy in the world."(1)

Royce finds that: "The religious experience of the individual may concern three objects: First, his Ideal, that is, the standard in terms of which he estimates the sense and the value of his own personal life; secondly, his Need of salvation, that is, the degree to which he falls short of attaining his ideal and is sundered from it by evil fortune, or by his own paralysis of will, or by his inward baseness; thirdly, the presence or the coming or the longing for, or the communion with something which he comes to view as the power that may ~~may~~ save him from his need, or as the light that may dispel his darkness, or as the truth that shows him the way out, or as the great companion who helps him--in a word, as his Deliverer. The Ideal, the Need, the Deliverer--these are the three objects which the individual experience, as a source of religious insight, has always undertaken to reveal."(2)

(1) Carpenter: p. 168.

(2) Josiah Royce: Sources of Religious Insight, p.28-29.

Paterson in his "Nature of Religion" says:

"The religious life of the race might even be described as the thread of divine romance which runs through the long-drawn acts and the crowded scenes of the drama of history; and though the secular historian naturally discovers the central movement in the progress of civilisation and the development of political institutions, it is not incredible that, in the intention of the divine author of the strange, eventful piece, the fundamental and unifying theme has been the history of man's quest of God, and of God's quest of the love, the trust and the obedience of man."(1)

William James has written: "Worship and sacrifice, procedures for working on the dispositions of the deity, theology and ceremony and ecclesiastical organization, are the essentials of religion in the institutional branch. Were we to limit our view to it, we should have to define religion as an external art, the art of winning the favor of the gods. In the more personal branch of religion it is on the contrary the inner dispositions of man himself which form the centre of interest, his conscience, his deserts, his helplessness, his incompleteness. And although the favor of the God, as forfeited or gained, is still an essential feature of

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(1) Paterson: The Nature of Religion, p.268. On p.227 he said that "....It is matter of observation that

the story, and theology plays a vital part therein, yet the acts to which this sort of religion prompts are personal not ritual acts, the individual transacts the business by himself alone, and the ecclesiastical organization, with its priests and sacraments and other go-betweens, sinks to an altogether secondary place. The relation goes direct from heart to heart, from soul to soul, between man and his maker.....Religion, therefore, as I now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."(1)

Galloway in his "Principles of Religious

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in numbered instances it (religion) has done what it undertook in the deliverance of a soul from the sense of alienation from God and from the thralldom of sin; and that it has also given such a victory over suffering and sorrow that thanks could be given even for the cross, and that all things--the evil as well as the good--could be declared to work together for good because men had found God and had loved God. And it has to be added that there is a widespread, deep-seated conviction--which is supported by much experience--to the effect that notwithstanding the reign of law there is still a God of Providence who is able to act in and through natural causes as the controller and disposer of all events, and whose guiding purpose is the highest good of the soul that puts its trust in Him."

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(1) William James: The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 28-31.

Development" sums up the matter as follows: "Here we must ask the reader to take it as sufficiently verified, that in all religion we have a subject, an object, and a bond of relationship between them. On the subjective side the consciousness of this relation is piety, and it appears as worship, reverence and adoration. In the individual himself there is always a sense of need, a feeling of defect of some kind, which impels him to go beyond himself. Then, on the other side, the object worshipped is always the embodiment of a value which distinguishes it from other things, and it is believed to be able to do for the worshipper what he could not do for himself. And through the fulfilment of the religious relation man wins an inner satisfaction, a harmony with himself and his environment, which lies beyond his own powers. Hence we find truth in Pfleiderer's description of the essence of religion as 'that reference of a man's life to a world-governing Power which seeks to grow into a living union with it'. A religion will stand higher or lower as it does justice to all the elements involved, and brings about a rich and enduring harmony of the personal life."(1)

E.S. Waterhouse sums up his study of religion in the conclusion that, "stated in the most general

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(1) Galloway: The Principles of Religious Development, p. 58.

manner, it would seem to be the belief in a higher order of things into due relation with which man must enter in order properly to adjust his life."(1)

Martineau's definition of religion is: "Belief in an Everliving God, that is, a Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe and holding moral relations with mankind."(2)

Snowden has a very concise definition: "Religion is conscious relation to God."(3)

The statements of Henry W.Clark in his "Philosophy of Christian Experience" are worth noting:

"What makes life, then? It is made by a right relation --it is made neither by what is beyond us nor by what is within us: it is made by the response of what is beyond us to what is within us, or by the response of what is within us to what is beyond us--by the harmony between the two."(4) In another place he says: "In setting itself to deal with man's moral condition, religion therefore addresses itself to a real and living need. By some means man must produce, or have produced, within himself a response of his character to God's-- a spiritual condition which shall bring back to God the circle of movement and evolution which started from God

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- (1) Modern Theories of Religion, p.5; Cf.Snowden, p.88.
- (2) Martineau: A Study of Religion, Vol.I, p.1.
- (3) Snowden: The Psychology of Religion, p.88.
- (4) H.W.Clark: Philosophy of Christian Experience, p.30.



long ago.....But when religion emphasized the fact that what man must seek for is a spiritual condition which shall correspond with the being of God Himself, which shall make man give to God the response of moral qualities kindred with His own, it is but propounding a doctrine to which experience and philosophy alike assent."

(1) Again Clark declares: "In so far as a man is religious, he should be sincere in his religious quest and correct in the religious method he pursues: religion would be all in all. It demands, in brief, that the heart of man shall be pervaded and suffused by a veritable passion for God."(2) And again: "It is upon a close personal relation that religion centres."(3)

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{1} Henry W. Clark, p. 48, 49.

{2} Ibid., pp. 216-217. On pp. 223-224 he declares: "The truly ordered life is the life whose absorbing passion is God.....The place of religion in life--so is the question sometimes formulated for discussion and debate. What is the place of religion in life? Like a good many other loose phrases, this phrase may sometimes pass unchallenged; but loose it certainly is. Religion has no place in life: religion is, or ought to be, life; and life is, or ought to be, religion." Speaking of faith he had said (p.194): "The true faith-relation is established between the soul and the life-communicating Christ when faith is taken as the actual passing of man's nature into the nature of Christ, or, conversely, as the actual reception of the nature of Christ into the nature of man. Identification of the believer with Him who is believed is, in brief, the very essence of faith."

{3} Ibid., p. 242 f. On page 231 we read: "The current substitution of philanthropy and brotherly love for inward religious experience is really a destruction of religion in its true distinctiveness, and puts into the place of the primary essential that which ought to be an automatically produced result. Religion is not philanthropy, but the more religion

William Newton Clarke says: "Religion is the life of man in his superhuman relations; that is, in his relation to the Power that produced him the Authority that is over him, and the unseen Being with whom he is capable of communion."(1)

C.C.Josey in his "Psychology of Religion", slights certain elements that appear as fundamental in the above: "Religion is an organized body of cult practices, based on the conviction that nature is moral, which are designed to bring the individual into proper relations with nature so conceived, and to induce him to accept the socially approved values of his group by setting them apart as sacred and investing them with such

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becomes passionate so much the more surely will philanthropy emerge." Also on page 236 we find: "The interest of the soul's relations with God, then, is to be the dominant interest of life: religion demands that they who accept it as having any title at all to place among life's concerns, shall subordinate all other concerns to its supremacy; it declares that the highest experience is that which is guided to its goal by a veritable passion for God."

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(1) William Newton Clarke: An Outline of Christian Theology, p.1. He goes on to say: "This unseen Being, this Authority, and this Power are one, in the good God and Father whom it is eternal life to know; but this is a last religious truth for man, rather than a first, and until this comes religion is incomplete, one-sided, and more or less misleading. But religion is always the life and experience of man as a being who is dependent upon power, answerable to authority, and adapted to commune with unseen, spiritual reality."

emotional accompaniments as submission, awe, piety, optimism and an enhanced sense of personal well-being and restored peace and contentment."(1)

R.S.Sleigh says: "Within the limits of human life, however, an affective consciousness of the absolute is attainable, and this is what the naive religious experience is, a consciousness in which God is immediately experienced by the finite spirit."(2)

Ladd arrives at the following definition:

"Taken at its lowest terms and considered as universal with man, religion is the belief in invisible, super-human powers (or a power) which are (is) conceived of after the analogy of the human spirit; on which (whom) man regards himself as dependent for his well-being, and to which (whom) he is, at least in some sense responsible for his conduct; together with the feelings

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(1) Charles Conant Josey: Psychology of Religion, p.59.

(2) R.S.Sleigh: The Sufficiency of Christianity, p.60.

He also adds: "On examination, this religious consciousness is found to contain the three constituents of psychic life in their unity--conation, cognition, and affection. This psychic state is, as such, an affective action and reaction of aspiration, appreciation, and surrender to something divined to be of absolute and unconditioned worth. It is a self-reference of the finite to the Infinite, an identification of itself with it, within which the finite is immediately and inwardly related to the root of all life, and becomes, in Plato's phrase, 'the spectator of all time and of all existence'. Real religion is a flare-up in the soul, immediate, spontaneous (at least relatively so), with a claim to be a vision of God."

and practices which naturally follow from such a belief."(1)

Principal Caird gives as the essence of religion the fact that, "the infinite has ceased to be merely a far off vision of spiritual attainment, and ideal of indefinite future perfection, but has become a present reality."(2)

Starbuck says; "The belief in God in some form is by far the most central conception, and grows in importance as years advance."(3)

Pratt proposes the following: "Religion is the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies."(4)

Frank S.Hickman in his "Introduction to the Psychology of Religion" has this statement: "Worship and religion in general move about one great center, the need which man feels for the help and companionship of some Being higher than himself and higher even than any of his human kind."(5)

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- (1)Ladd: Philosophy of Religion, Vol.I, p. 89.
- (2)Quoted by Gaebelain, p.8.Cf.J.Caird:Philolophy of Religion, p. 317 ff.
- (3)Starbuck: The Psychology of Religion, p. 320.
- (4)Pratt: The Religious Consciousness, p.2.
- (5)Frank S.Hickman: Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, p.347. Later in his book (p. 490), he says: "It is of the essence of religion that man does not feel himself to be self-sufficient in the battle of life, but virtually hangs upon some existence or power greater than himself for protection and aid."

Elmer T. Clark regards the statement of Strickland as expressing the "essential element and nature of religious experience"(1); "It is a conscious reaction or group of reactions in which an attitude of dependence is taken to a Superhuman Power or to the Superhuman Power (usually conceived as personal) with the underlying purpose more or less definitely formed of soliciting the aid and help of the Powers or Power so as to secure the satisfaction of needs or desires."(2)

Dresser, after having given and discussed the relative merits of a group of definitions comes to the conclusion that, "We are at liberty therefore to regard as the essence of religion that which seems to the worshiper or group to bring man nearest the divine, whatever may be the given conception of the holy or sacred element in the special case; and whatever the belief in revelation, inner experience, reason, instinct, sentiment, intuition to which religion is primarily attributed. Thus we find Caird saying that 'Christianity and all the higher religions have claimed to be the great power that consecrates and idealized the life of man by relating it to that which is eternal and divine.'"(3)

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- (1) Elmer T. Clark: The Psychology of Religious Awakening, p. 23.
- (2) Strickland: Psychology of Religious Experience, p. 53.
- (3) H. W. Dresser: Outlines of the Psychology of Religion, p. 13. He is quoting E. Caird: The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers, Vol. I, p. 9. He found his clue in the term consciousness. He quotes Caird: "Man as a religious being is a being 'who in all ages has been conscious of himself as standing in vital

C. Conclusion: the Central Idea of Religion.

In view of the universality of religion and on the basis of the definitions that have been given we shall now sift them in order to discover their common and essential elements which should be the central factor in religion. In conclusion the works of Kenneth Edward and Rudolph Otto shall be referred to as covering this subject more adequately than we are able to do here. They have been found to be very helpful in drawing the conclusion as to that which is the heart and core of religion as presented in so many ways and from so many angles by the writers above quoted. But first there are one or two general observations which may be made in working toward this conclusion.

1. Religion is Closely Associated with a Sense of Need on the Part of Man.

Soper remarks: "The development of religion follows and is determined by a sense of need."(1) Orr implies this need when he speaks of religion as "the search of the soul for an adequate spiritual object to rest in...."(2) We see this sense of need reflected

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relation to a supreme object of reverence and worship whom he calls God'."(Caird, p.2) Dresser, p.12.

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(1) Soper, p. 37.

(2) Orr: Christian View of God and the World, p. 135.

in the definitions which have been listed above. It may be the need for the "help and companionship" as Hickman states it.(1) It may be the "sense of dependence" as Jordan puts it.(2) It is akin to the "passion for God" of which Clark speaks.(3) Royce speaks "of the cry of humanity for sálvation".(4) Carpenter spoke of the "essential religious demands of man's being".(5) Gaebelein quotes Feuerbach, a German rationalist, who makes the statement in his "Essence of Christianity": "The sick heart of man is the source of all religion, and of all misery."(6) But however it may be expressed, there is as a part of religion, this reaching out, this felt need, or a longing on man's part. Now it is only natural to ask, for what does man long, where does he look to find the satisfaction of his need? We make our second general observation.

## 2.A Higher Power or Supreme Being is Essential to Religion.

We need only review the definitions which have been presented to see how essential this point

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(1) See p. 39 above.

(2) Jordan: Short Psychology of Religion, p.100.

(3) See p. 36 above.

(4) Royce, p. 11.

(5) Carpenter, p. 18; see above p. 27 f.

(6) Gaebelein, p.8.

really is. Those which define religion without reference to a belief in a Higher Power have given only partial definitions. As Orr has declared: "No theory of religion can be adequate which does not cast light on the deepest ground of the soul's movement towards God, and on the nature of the object which alone can adequately satisfy it."(1) Ladd in his Philosophy of Religion, speaking of the "concept of Divine Being", says, "Indifference to this conception is not only the very essence of irreligion, but it is also subject to the charge of being an intellectually unworthy and morally wrong attitude of mind."(2) To quote again the statement of Carpenter in his Permanent Elements of Religion: speaking of the three elements, Dependence, Fellowship, and Progress, "none of these can be satisfied except on the supposition of the truth and reality of the object of worship. To resolve this into a mere ideal is to destroy the basis of religion. Unless man feels that he yields allegiance or submission to some Real Power greater than self, he has no religion in the true sense."(3) Kenneth Edward to whom we shall refer again in a moment, speaks very much to the point on this matter: "Religion has consistently interpreted its experience as referring to a real Divine Being, with whom communion is possible and is actively sought. Religion

(1)Orr, p. 134.

(2)Ladd, Vol.II, p. 15.

(3)Carpenter, p. xlv. See p. 27 f.



has always believed that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. And, moreover, this consistent objectivity is of the very essence of religion. Religion would cease with the disappearance of the faith that it is in touch with a divine reality. Something else might occupy its place, but that something else would not be religion as we know it, and as it has been manifested in every age and place. Religion as a concrete fact of human history we have already seen good reason to define by this very reference to God."(1) Galloway has spoken in a like manner: "We must ask the reader to take it as sufficiently verified, that in all religion we have a subject, an object, and a bond of relationship between them,"(2)--a position which we have been trying to verify. Returning also to Clark: "The current substitution of philanthropy and brotherly love for inward religious experience is really a destruction of religion in its true distinctiveness"(3) and, "The interest of the soul's relations with God is to be the dominant interest of life."(4) The recognition of this higher Power in all religions is probably due as Gaebelein suggests, to the fact that "man was created as a

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(1) Kenneth Edward, p. 195. See note below.

(2) Galloway, p. 58. See above p. 34.

(3) Clark, p. 231. See above p. 36 footnote.

(4) Clark, p. 236. See above p. 36 footnote.

spiritual being."(1)

Let us now concentrate upon that which appears to be the central idea of religion. In drawing our conclusion we point to the work of Kenneth Edward, E.S. Waterhouse, and Rudolph Otto as summarizing some of the best results of modern scholars on this subject. Kenneth Edward (2) briefly describes the religious experience as "an experience of God and of our relationship with Him". (3) He also says: "It may be asked, in conclusion, whether our definition covers all manifestations of religion. Can it be said that 'an experience of God, and of our relationship with Him' is found in every religion? That is a question which is all-important and which deserves most careful study. It has, however, been discussed very pointedly in a recent work--The Philosophy of Religious Experience, by E.S. Waterhouse--and it is not necessary for me here to do more than refer you to that writer's survey of the question."(4) He proceeds to sum up the argument of Waterhouse as follows:

"Waterhouse argues with good reason that it is far more probable that rites which seem to be independent of all idea of spiritual beings, are in reality survivals from a more primitive time in which they were so connected, than that they are evidence of a religious cult existing

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(1) Gaebelain, p. 66 f.

(2) Kenneth Edward: Religious Experience: Its Nature and Truth. Dr. Albert Clarke Wyckoff in his review of

without gods. These reasons seem, therefore, of far too little weight to set aside the universal evidence we have from all other forms of religion from highest to lowest, that some idea of gods or of God is central and essential to the religious experience. I have gladly availed myself of the short but vigorous argument of Professor Waterhouse, of which the above is but a bare outline, as that argument seems to me to dispose of the most representative and outstanding example of the attempt to define religion without reference to God. I am glad also to find that Professor Waterhouse adopts a definition which is very close to that which I have proposed. 'In the most general sense', he says, 'religion is belief in a more-than-human order, and an attempt to establish harmonious relation with

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this book published in the Biblical Review for October 1926, p. 620 ff., says of it: "The claim of this book lies in the fact that it represents one of the first successful attempts to incorporate into a well rounded theory of religious consciousness and experience the best and latest psychological data, and to blend this new knowledge with a philosophical and theological point of view which brings the whole discussion of the subject completely within the range of present/day knowledge, and at the same time remains soundly theistic."

(3) Edward, p. 18.  
(4) Ibid., p. 22-23.

it."(1)

Otto in his "Idea of the Holy" further confirms our conclusion on this matter. In his chapter on "'Numen' and the 'Numenous'" he has this sentence: "'Holiness'--'the holy'--is a category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion".

(2) He points out that there is an "over plus of meaning" in this term holy and proceeds to try to isolate it. He goes on to say: "It will be our endeavour to suggest this unnamed Something to the reader as far as we may, so that he may himself feel it. There is no religion in which it does not live as the real innermost core, and without it no religion would be worthy of the

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(1)Edward, p.24. Edward also refers to Otto who "has a very important footnote in which he quotes a passage from James which is strikingly confirmatory of his position, and is all the more remarkable as coming from a psychologist who in the main employs the method of analysis which Otto criticises. James, in speaking of the origin of the Greek representations of the gods, says: 'As regards the origin of the Greek gods, we need not at present seek an opinion. But the whole array of our instances leads to a conclusion something like this: It is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call something there, more deep and more general than any of the special and particular 'senses' by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed.' This is, in fact, a full admission by this writer of a distinctively religious content, a presentation of a simple and primitive character, the presence of which constitutes and distinguishes the specifically religious experience."(Edward, p. 66)

(2)Otto: The Idea of the Holy, p.5.

name. It is pre-eminently a living force in the Semitic religions, and of these again in none has it such vigour as in that of the Bible."(1)

We therefore believe that we have arrived at a justifiable conclusion that the central idea in religion is this reaching out of the heart of man for communion and companionship with a Higher Power. In other words as shall be seen when the Christian religion is considered, it is the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God.

The next step has already been suggested. The question naturally arises, what is the relation of this general statement covering all religions to Christianity? Certainly it is not meant to imply that Christianity is on a par with other religions or for that matter with any other religion. Although it may be true that the thing which all men are seeking, no matter to what religious group they may belong, is the same, nevertheless Christianity occupies a unique place in its ability to fulfil the religious needs of man.

We shall now proceed to a consideration of Christianity to see how in its history it not only confirms our conclusion as to the central idea of religion but also how and why it stands supreme among all religions. This will also assure us of a trustworthy standard

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(1)Otto, p.6.

by which we may observe and estimate this great religious movement within Christianity that took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It will help us to estimate the permanent value of the Reformation and the faith of the Protestant churches. We hope that it will take us to the very root of the problem of this thesis and enable us to get at its underlying values. We turn now to see how the conclusions of this chapter apply to Christianity and how they find their confirmation in the history of the Church.

CHAPTER III  
THE CENTRAL IDEA OF CHRISTIANITY

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A. Introduction.

1. The Purpose of the Chapter.

The purpose of the present chapter is to make clear an essential step which comes between our definition of the central idea of religion and our study of the basic truth or central idea of the Reformation. As suggested at the close of the preceding chapter, the question naturally arises, what is the relation of Christianity in its essence to the central idea of religion? In the pages which follow we propose to survey historic Christianity with regard to the answer to this question. We believe that it is a justifiable conclusion--as we shall try to demonstrate in this chapter--that the central idea of religion as described in the preceding chapter is not only confirmed by Christianity but that in Christianity it is uniquely demonstrated to be true. In other words, Christianity is unique in its ability to satisfy the religious needs of man and to bring him into that fellowship with the Supreme Being which only can satisfy that need. Or again, the true and only adequate conception of the central idea of religion is also that which is at the heart of Christianity. A word shall now be said with



regard to the plan of procedure in this chapter.

## 2. The Plan of the Chapter.

It appears opportune and relevant that at this point a further conclusion should be made on the basis of the preceding chapter. Inasmuch as many of the definitions presented were from those who see in Christianity the religion which is really able to satisfy man's religious needs--a religion which is unique among all religions--to make these additional observations will throw light on the question which this chapter is attempting to answer, namely, what is the relation of Christianity in its essence to the central idea of religion?

Following this additional treatment of the definitions of religion we shall view Christianity historically to see what has been at the center of man's desires as revealed in its various periods and movements. In other words, does historic Christianity support and bear out the conclusion that the central idea of religion is the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God? This is the question to be considered throughout this present chapter.

Of course it is evident that such a survey as this chapter proposes to make can not do more than consider a few illustrations which we believe are representative of the whole, and which will demonstrate that the

heart of Christianity is that which we have just stated it to be, and that the Christian religion holds a unique position in its power to bring to pass this relation between the Most High and the children of men.

**B. An Additional Conclusion on  
the Preceding Chapter.**

At this point in the discussion of the answer to the question of this chapter, it will be well to note that many of the definitions of religion which were given above to bring out the central idea of religion were definitions given by those who find in Christianity the true and only adequate religion.

Kenneth Edward, to whose reliable work on this subject reference has already been made and who gave a definition of religion which is very much to the point and includes the best to be found in other definitions (1), does not hesitate to say that, "In defending religion, it is the Christian religion which I have in mind. Religion reaches its height and culmination in Christianity, and I do not think it necessary, in any supposedly scientific interest, to conceal my conviction that it is because of the greatness of man's spiritual heritage in the Christian religion, that religion retains for us the significance which it undoubtedly does continue to hold, and compels the interest of

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(1) See above p. 45 f.

all serious-minded men. I do not hesitate to affirm that it is in very large measure because of the content of the Christian faith, the fine flower of the Christian life, and the great creations of the Christian spirit in the corporate life of mankind, that men of each new generation feel the incumbrance of the task of vindicating religion to the thought of their time as bestowing upon man the greatest and most real of his possessions. I take no shame that my work is in the line of Christian Apologia."(1)

Henry W. Clark in his definition of religion, when he describes it as a "veritable passion for God"(2) has in mind the God of the Christian religion in which Christ has an indispensable place.(3)

William Newton Clarke who defined religion as "the life of man in his superhuman relations"(4) remarks by way of relating this to Christianity: "Chris-

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(1) Edward, p. 6-7.

(2) See above p. 36.

(3) Speaking of faith (p. 159), Clark says: "Faith must be the actual movement of man's whole personality to itself with, and to lose itself in, the personality of Christ." See above p. 36, footnote (2), "The true faith-relation is established between the soul and the life-communicating Christ when faith is taken as the actual passing of man's nature into the nature of Christ, or, conversely, as the actual reception of the nature of Christ into the nature of man. Identification of the believer with Him who is believed is, in brief, the very essence of faith." (Clark, p. 194)

(4) See above, p. 37.

tianity is a religion, inasmuch as it is one of the forms taken by the life of man in his relations with God. It differs from other religions in this, that its conception of God and of man's relation to him, and its impulse and power for the religious life, are derived from a self-revelation of God in human history, which culminated in Jesus Christ; and that it is under the influence of that revelation that the Christian religious life is lived. Nineteen centuries ago a certain part of mankind began to live the religious life under the influence of Jesus Christ. From him came fresh views of God in his character and relationship with men, and new power to live in holy fellowship with him. Christ opened to men new possibility of fulfilling the idea of religion; and after him the life of religion was more true to reality and more satisfactory in experience."<sup>(1)</sup>

Among other things, Sleight, whose definition

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(1) Wm. N. Clarke, p. 5-6. He remarks a little later (p. 8) that "In all the great non-Christian religions there are expressions of holy aspiration, or of love and adoration toward a good God, that are worthy utterances of religion, and closely akin to Christianity. There is something profoundly touching to a Christian heart in the best non-Christian prayers. The religions are often better than their theologies, as the heart is apt to be wiser than the head: yet even the theologies, though they may account absurdly for what is genuinely religious, are results of sincere reflection upon the universal problems."

has been quoted (1), says: "Speaking generally, therefore, we find that we are able to exhibit Christianity by historico-philosophical considerations as the highest type of personalistic redemptive religion."(2)

Ladd, in his Philosophy of Religion quoted above (3), declares: "Above all in Christianity it is the positive content of its conception of personal life as applied to God, and of personal relations as existing between man and God, which chiefly determines its superiority over all other religions."(4)

Carpenter (5) finds Christianity the only religion that adequately satisfies the essential religious needs of man. "The hopes of humanity are assured in One to whom all power is given, Who is to her both Son of God and Son of man."(6)

The unique position of Christianity with respect to other religions has been very fairly set forth by Soper in his work to which reference has already been made. "The word 'false' is not to be used with reference to other religions", he says. He continues, "That word is reserved for the sordid and insincere, for the unworthy and base among the adherents of any religion,

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- (1) See above p. 38.
- (2) Sleigh, p. 114.
- (3) See above p. 38.
- (4) Ladd, Vol. II, p. 8.
- (5) See above p. 27 f.
- (6) Carpenter, p. 238-240.

Christianity included. The Christian cannot but look on all other religions as the expression of man's unsatisfied longing after God and his attempt to reach the blessedness God alone can impart. Seen in this light the Christian cannot be intolerant. He must sympathize with the religious spirit in every place, even when it is openly antagonistic to him and his message. He will appreciate all the good to be found in every faith at the same time that he sees the inadequacy of the remedies that are applied. And in the end it will be impossible to refrain from giving to those who do not know Jesus Christ the message of moral victory and spiritual exaltation which can only be achieved through him. And this is the primary and everlasting purpose of Christian missions."(1)

Thus it is that experts in the fields of the psychology and philosophy of religion frame their definitions on the basis of Christianity because they find that it supremely contains that which is the heart of religion and has proved itself superior in its ability to satisfy the religious needs of men.

C. The Central Idea of Religion  
Confirmed in Historic Christianity.

1. Confirmed by the Religion of Ancient Israel.

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(1) Soper, p. 16.

The religion of ancient Israel, as found in the Old Testament, is included because it is the forerunner of Christianity. The New Testament is not to be separated from the Old Testament; the "teachings of Jesus" are not new. Christ came to "fulfil"; he was the culmination of the "fulness of time". The religion of the New Testament had its roots in the old dispensation. Our purpose is to show how before the coming of Christ, religious experience centered about the attaining and maintaining of fellowship with God.

The Psalms, the song book of Israel and also of Christianity, strike their keynote and have an almost universal appeal in such passages as,

"Jehovah is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.....  
Yea, though I walk through the  
valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;....  
And I shall dwell in the house of  
Jehovah forever."(1)

Or again,

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks,  
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.  
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:  
When shall I come and appear before God?"(2)

In the words of Job is heard the cry of the human soul for God:

"Oh that I knew where I might find him!  
That I might come even to his seat!"(3)

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(1)Psalm 23. (2)Psalm 42:1-2. (3)Job 23:3.

The book of Leviticus is an interesting illustration of how the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between God and man is the heart of the religion of ancient Israel. It may be taken as expressing that which is common to the other books of the Old Testament. The first part of the book is concerned with the laws of offerings, the consecration of the priests, the cleansing and purification of the people, and the atonement for sin--the "at-one-ment" of the people with God. It is a book which emphasizes the holiness of God, presenting the holy character of the one with whom they long to have fellowship. From the 18th chapter on, there are given a number of sundry laws, prohibitions, and regulations which are aimed at maintaining man in that relationship with God, of which the way of attainment was given in the first 17 chapters.

The concern of the prophets was that the people should walk in the ways of Jehovah and not foolishly forsake that great fellowship and blessing of God which it was their privilege to have. Isaiah delivered to them the message: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not



consider."(1)

Jeremiah declared a similar message: "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."(2)

Thus in the religion of Israel there was the longing for and reaching out after companionship with God. The central purpose was to bring man into relation with God and so to guide and motivate life that it would be kept in that closeness of relation. When the people would forget God then it was time for the prophets to sound the warning in Israel. If we compare the religion of Israel with the immorality, injustice, and idolatry of other religions of the time, this forerunner of Christianity is seen to stand at the top and to hold a unique place among religions even at that time.

## 2. Confirmed in the Gospels.

In the close relation of Jesus to the Father is a demonstration of the heart of religion. How often Jesus went apart to pray. When he was seized at the direction of Judas, he was taken in the Garden of Gethsemane where he had spent the night in prayer. The

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(1) Isaiah 1:2-3.

(2) Jeremiah 2:13.

fellowship between the Father and the Son is seen in the passage: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." Then follows that great invitation which has opened the door to man to enter into a great fellowship with the Son: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."(1)

The essence of religion was being sought by Philip when he made his request: "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us."(2) The prayer of Jesus in John 17 is another illustration showing the central importance of fellowship between God and man: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."(3)

### 3. Confirmed in Apostolic Christianity.

Christianity, having its greatest and fullest

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- (1) Matt. 11:27-30.
- (2) John 14:8.
- (3) John 17:3.

revelation in a unique person, went on to carry a unique message to the world through men and women who gave a testimony in life and word that it was no ordinary power manifesting itself through them. The apostles from the day of Pentecost stood up and spake forth boldly the message of the crucified and risen Christ. Philip Schaff remarks concerning early Christianity: "At first an insignificant and even contemptible sect in the eyes of the carnal mind, hated and persecuted by Jews and heathens, it confounds the wisdom of Greece and the power of Rome, soon plants the standard of the cross in the great cities of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and proves itself the hope of the world."(1)

What was the religion of those who thus went forth? To those who received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, it was not only power and courage to witness, but it was a testimony of the presence of God with them. (2) Later Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."(3) A.T. Robertson, speaking of Paul's conversion, says: "Jesus manifested Himself to Paul." "It was not of Paul's wish

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(1) Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. I, p. 198.

(2) See Acts, chapter 2.

(3) II Cor. 4:6.

nor with his consent. But the undoubted presence and voice of the Risen Jesus convinced Paul that he was hopelessly in error. The look that Jesus gave Paul before he became blind remained with him forever. On that day Light shined into **his** heart", and then Robertson quotes the verse just given. "He understood now why Stephen had died rather than give up that Light that had shined into his own heart. It was here that Paul received his great qualification to interpret Christ. It was in the look that passed between Paul and Jesus."(1)

It is this conception of the central idea of religion which is to be found in Paul's address to the people of Athens where he perceived that they were "very religious" and observed that there was an extra altar inscribed "To An Unknown God".(2) He said to them: "What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you. The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath and all things; and he made of one every nation of men to

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(1) A.T. Robertson: Paul the Interpreter of Christ, p.17.  
(2) Acts 17:22 ff.

dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being."(1)

Deissmann in his book on St. Paul writes: "With these words we have not only grasped the secret of all of St. Paul's religion--we have also described it in terms made sacred by St. Paul: 'Christ in Paul(Gal.2:20), Paul in Christ(numerous passages)'"(2) He says also, speaking of the religion of St. Paul: "It is not first of all a doctrine concerning Christ, it is 'fellowship' with Christ.(3) St. Paul lived 'in' Christ, 'in' the living and present spiritual Christ, who is about him on all sides, dwells in him(Gal.2:20), speaks to him (II Cor. 12:9), speaks in and through him (II Cor. 13:3). To St. Paul Christ is not a person of the past, with whom he can have intercourse only by meditating on his words that have been handed down, not a great 'historic' figure, but a reality and power of the present, an 'energy' whose life-giving power is daily made perfect

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(1) Acts 17:23-28.

(2) Adolf Deissmann: St. Paul (trans. by Strachan), p.123.

(3) Deissmann points to I Cor.1:9; 10:16; Phil.3:10. "The word used is *κοινωνία*, an inimitable vivid expression."

in him."(1)

A recent writer asserts that the heart of St. Paul's teaching and the permanent in it was that salvation was to be effected by communion with the Divine through union with Christ.(2) T.R.Glover says of the apostle: "He had faced the facts, above all the fact of the crucified Jesus; he had penetrated to the meaning; he has won through to certainty and found God."(3)

Paul was one who rejoiced always in the Lord; he himself was not anxious, and in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving made his requests known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, guarded his heart and his thoughts in Christ Jesus.(4)

In that letter which has been called his "last will and testament", he wrote, "I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day."(5) This is the heart of the religion of the New Testament, this is the heart of Christianity. No other religion has ever demonstrated a like capacity to bring man into true fellowship with God and enable him to live

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(1) Deissmann: St. Paul, pp. 123-124.

(2) H. Bulcock: The Passing and Permanent in St. Paul, p. 162.

(3) T. R. Glover: Paul of Tarsus, p. 93.

(4) See Phil. 4:4-7.

(5) II Tim. 1:12.

joyfully and triumphantly in that fellowship.

It might be added that the heart of the book of Revelation is this very thing, emphasizing worship particularly. "And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever."(1) It is to be noted that this was a book which came out of a period of severe persecution for the Christians and it is significant that in later times those who have gone through similar trials for the Gospel's sake have found in it a book which meets their needs--it seems to bring them into that closest fellowship with God which they need and seek, and it is as a refuge to them in their danger.

#### 4. Confirmed by the Rise of Montanism.

It is a significant fact that not infrequently in the history of the Church there have arisen movements of a fanatical and even of an heretical character which have borne their testimony to the essence and truth of religion. They usually occur as a reaction or protest against laxity in religion, against formalism in religion, or against anything which tends to obscure that

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(1) Rev. 5:13.

which is central to religion and essential to man-- namely, fellowship with God. One such movement in the period of the Early Church was Montanism.

Montanism arose near the middle of the second century. It had as its leader Montanus, a Phrygian presbyter "who held millenarian views and made fanatical claims to inspiration. He protested against the laxity of the Church discipline and especially the readmission, even after penitence, of those who had lapsed into apostasy or other deadly sin."(1) It set forth a new moral standard, especially with respect to marriage, fasting, and martyrdom. Properly speaking, Montanism was not a form of heresy but rather an "excessive supernaturalism and extreme puritanism over against Gnostic rationalism and catholic laxity." There is no doubt that it was earnest and well-meaning in its attempt for reform, but it was a "gloomy and fanatical hyper-Christianity, which, like all hyper-spiritualism, is apt to end in the flesh."(2) "But the religious

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- (1) H. Cowan: Landmarks of Church History, p. 29 f.
- (2) Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. II, p. 417 f. In doctrine, Montanism agreed in all essential points with the Catholic Church, and held very firmly to the traditional rule of faith. But in practical life and discipline it came into conflict with the reigning Catholicism. It sought a forced continuance of the miraculous gifts of the apostolic church. It asserted the universal priesthood of Christians, even of females, against the special priesthood in the Catholic Church. Another of its essential and prominent traits was a visionary



earnestness which animated it, its prophecies and visions, its millennarianism, and the fanatical extremes into which it ran, have since reappeared under various names and forms, and in new combinations, in Novatianism, Donatism, the spiritualism of the Franciscans, Anabaptism, the Camisard enthusiasm, Puritanism, Quakerism, Quietism, Pietism, Second Adventism, Irvingism, and so on, by way of protest and wholesome reaction against various evils in the church."(1)

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millennarianism. Finally it was characterized by fanatical severity in asceticism and church discipline. Cf. Schaff, Vol.II, p.421 f. It went to extreme and "fell from evangelical freedom into Jewish legalism." "Montanism turned with horror from all the enjoyments of life, and held even art to be incompatible with Christian soberness and humility. It forbade women all ornamental clothing, and required virgins to be veiled. It courted the blood-baptism of martyrdom, and condemned concealment or flight in persecution as a denial of Christ. It multiplied fasts and other ascetic exercises, and carried them to extreme severity, as the best preparation for the millennium. It prohibited second marriage as adultery, for laity as well as clergy, and inclined even to regard a single marriage as a mere concession on the part of God to the sensuous nature of man. It taught the impossibility of a second repentance, and refused to restore the lapsed to the fellowship of the church. Tertullian held all mortal sins (of which he numbers seven), committed after baptism, to be unpardonable, at least in this world, and a church, which showed such lenity towards gross offenders, as the Roman church at that time did, according to the corroborating testimony of Hippolytus, he called worse than a 'den of thieves', even a 'spelunca maechorum et fornicatorum.'" p. 425.

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(1)Schaff, Vol.II, pp. 426-427.

Montanism was the result of unfaithfulness among the members of the Church. It was an earnest attempt to regain that which the inner nature of man longs for; it shows how the heart of man will rise up in protest against that which despoils it of fellowship with God.

Carpenter describes Montanism as a cry for fellowship. "Men began to ask whether the door between themselves and God had been closed, or if the river of life, which had flowed in Apostolic times had been cut off.....It certainly included men who claimed for themselves direct and immediate intercourse and communion with the God of their life."(1)

##### 5. Confirmed by the Rise of Monasticism.

The ascetic type of life is a reaction of the more earnest soul against the indifference, the immorality, the secularism, or the materialism of his age. It is the method which he chooses in order to subdue and submerge the fleshly desires of his own self so that the spirit may be able to enter into control. The Christian ascetic strives after the "glorification of the body and personal fellowship with the living God".(2) It often

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(1) Carpenter: The Permanent Elements in Religion, p.106 f.  
(2) Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol.III, p. 153.

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came about as a reaction against a secularizing state-church system and the decay of discipline. It was an earnest, well-meant attempt to save the virginal purity of the Christian religion by separating the life from society and by submitting it to the most rigorous discipline. Schaff says of Monasticism: "It rests upon an earnest view of life; upon the instinctive struggle after perfect dominion of the spirit over the flesh, reason over sense, the supernatural over the natural, after the highest grade of holiness and an undisturbed communion of the soul with God."(1) He adds later, "The positive aspect of manasticism is unreserved surrender of the whole man, with all his time and strength to God; though.....not within, but without the sphere of society and the order of nature.....With all the austerities and rigors of asceticism, the monastic life had its spiritual joys and irresistible charms for noble, contemplative, and heaven aspiring souls, who fled from the turmoil and vain show of the city as a prison and turned the solitude into a paradise of freedom and sweet communion with God and his saints."(2)

Although monasticism had its detrimental effects and eventually became morally ruinous to a great many, nevertheless the great monastic orders "under an

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(1)Schaff, Vol.III, p. 158-159.

(2)Ibid., p. 160.

overruling Providence became for centuries a potent instrument of temporal progress and spiritual well-being."

(1) In its rise it revealed the desire of the human heart to get rid of every hindrance which lies between the soul of man and God. "Earthliness hinders man's union with God; impurity makes the Divine vision impossible. All that is earthly and impure must be got rid of. Man must rise out of the lower region, where sin and worldliness dwell, into the pure heaven where God's presence is felt. In this we have the struggle of man towards Fellowship with the Divine."(2) It is another confirmation of our conclusion that the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God is the heart of Christianity and of religion in general.

#### 6. Confirmed by the Catharist Heresy.

The sect which is known as the Albigenses is taken as an example of the numerous groups who have been known as the Cathari. In the Albigensian revolt of the later middle ages is to be seen another expression of religion similar to that described in Montanism. Although there is a difference of opinion, the position is held by many that their doctrines were of a questionable dualistic character; yet it must be admitted that

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(1)Cowan: Landmarks of Church History, p. 59.

(2)Carpenter: The Permanent Elements in Religion, p.114.

they exhibited a type of life that presented no slight contrast to much that existed about them in their day. At least their life was such and their devotion to what they believed was such, that thousands of them were faithful unto death in the great persecution that swept over their territory in southern France.(1) Their simplicity of life, their honesty, their thrift, their temperance, their purity, their modesty, their simplicity of worship, and their devotion and steadfastness to their faith all stand in contrast to that which was prevalent in their day and particularly among the religious leadership. Regardless of the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of the formal tenets of the faith of these people, this movement was a protest against medieval ecclesiasticism, against empty sacerdotalism which had not only failed to feed their souls but had placed itself between man and God. This movement was a manifestation of that longing of the religious nature for immediate access to God which in the case of these other movements, has protested against that which intrudes between the seeking, aspiring spirit of man and the infinite heart of God. The Albigenses were seeking that

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(1)G.J.Jordan: A Short Psychology of Religion, p.38, says: "The history of the Noble Army of Martyrs is a record of appeal to individual, or to an immediate personal relation to God, as over against the formal, the traditional, the organized religious customs and doctrines of their age." This may well be applied to the Albigenses.

which is central in religion.

7. Confirmed by the Element of Mysticism.

Mysticism is an illustration of the same demand of humanity. Many monks were mystics. Those who sought the cloister, or joined religious orders, or associated themselves with new teachers, must have been men and women whose spirits longed after God. The Albigenses and other sects of a kindred nature have been recognized as possessing this aim. (1) "These movements", declares Allen in his *Continuity of Christian Thought*, "however diverse in aspect, were yet alike in their aim to realize a closer relationship and communion between God and man, and to seek God within the soul, rather than at a distance from it without." (2)

William R. Inge, in defining mysticism brings out very clearly this idea in it which illumines and confirms the central idea of religion. He says: "Religious mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature; or, more generally, as the attempt to realize in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal. Our consciousness of the beyond is, I say, the raw

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(1) Carpenter, p. 114 ff.

(2) Allen: *Continuity of Christian Thought*, p. 207.

material of all religion."(1)

"The heart of humanity cannot be silent", writes another. "It demands Fellowship in religion, and we can hear its demand in the history of Christianity; in St. Bernard and St. Bonaventura--in the mystics of Germany--in Eckart, Tauler, Nicolas of Basle, in the company known as the Dear Friends of God in the Oberland, in the Quietists, in Molinos, Fenelon, and Madame Guyon. It is easy to see the mistakes of the mystics; it is not difficult for ingenuity to ridicule them, or orthodoxy to denounce them; but it is acting like the deaf adder to stop our ears to the voice which they raised, witnessing to the quenchless desire of humanity, and demanding that religion should supply not only a

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(1)W.R.Inge: Christian Mysticism, p. 5. Evelyn Underhill in her work on the Mystics of the Church has written: "The Christian mystic therefore, is one for whom God and Christ are not merely objects of belief, but living facts experimentally known at first hand; and mysticism for him becomes, in so far as he responds to its demands, a life based on this conscious communion with God. It is found in experience that this communion in all its varying forms and degrees, is always a communion of love; and, in its perfection, so intimate and all-pervading that the word 'union' describes it best. When St. Augustine said, 'My life shall be a real life, being wholly full of Thee', he described in these words the ideal of a true Christian mysticism." (pp.9-10).

Divine Power, but a Divine Presence."(1)

Sleigh points out that, "Mysticism in its strictest sense is nothing more nor less than a striving after immediacy and inwardness in religious experience.....But without mysticism there is no real religion, and religious psychology makes nothing more clear than the fact that the characteristic pulse of religion beats in these mystical experiences."(2)

A good illustration of the point under discussion and a confirmation of the central idea of religion is that to be found in the hymnology of the Christian Church. Such familiar hymns as "Jesus, lover of my soul", "Nearer my God to Thee", and "Rock of Ages", are familiar because they have found a response in the heart of mankind. A hymn such as that of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, expresses and confirms the central idea of religion herein set forth:

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- (1) Carpenter, p. 117. William James in his Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 447, says: "What keeps religion going is something else than abstract definitions and systems of concatenated adjectives, and something different from faculties of theology and their Professors. All these things are after-effects, secondary accretions upon those phenomena of vital conversation with the Unseen Divine."
- (2) Sleigh, p. 62 and 63. Bulcock in his recent work, Religion and Its New Testament Expression, says that "Religion is the outcome of a mysticism fundamental in the human mind and personality." (p.37)



"Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy Presence rest."

D. Conclusion: The Central Idea of Christianity.

"To be near unto God", writes Abraham Kuyper, "is our most blessed experience, and in the face of distraction and temptation our soul on the point of fainting can yet turn away from the world unto God, inasmuch as a voice within whispers that he who forsakes God disturbs the peace in his own heart."(1)

"To be near unto God", is not this a good summary of the central idea of Christianity? And this is not to omit Jesus Christ for Kuyper says a few pages later: "Every place wheresoever, can at any moment become a Zion unto us; depending on this alone, that you approach your God in Him through Whom there is access, and Who ever liveth to make intercession for us(Heb. 7:25)."(2) Herein also, is the uniqueness of Christianity. In and through Jesus Christ do men gain the moral victory and find closeness of fellowship with God.

From the two points of view in this chapter, that of the psychologist, and that of the historian, the central idea of religion has not only been demon-

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(1)Kuyper: To Be Near Unto God, p. 671.

(2)Ibid., p. 676.

strated and confirmed in Christianity, but in Christianity it finds its full flower. In comparison, other religions are at best only partial. Christianity is the only religion that can adequately meet the religious needs of men and satisfy the longings of their hearts. Therefore in dealing with that which is the central idea of religion as it has been expressed and confirmed we are dealing with that which is permanent.

We are now in a position to ask of a religion, or a religious movement, or any expression of religion: Does it have at its heart that which is essential in religion, namely, the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God? If this is not to be found or if it is given a secondary place such a movement will not endure for it will not be able to give adequate satisfaction to the restless heart of man. To the extent that the central idea of religion is given its true place in its highest and fullest expression as found in the religion that came from the apostolic Church, to that extent will it be permanent and valuable in its contribution to mankind.

In the light of this study of the central idea of religion, using it as a basis of judgment, this thesis now turns to the second field of its study, that great movement in the Christian Church, the Protestant Reformation. Did it involve and revolve about that

which is the vital and essential factor in religion?  
If its innermost principle was concerned with the at-  
taining and maintaining of fellowship between man and  
God, then it was developed on a true foundation and  
has in it that which promises its permanency.

PART II

THE BASIC TRUTH OF THE REFORMATION

CHAPTER IV

THE BASIC TRUTH OF THE REFORMATION STATED

## PART II

### THE BASIC TRUTH OF THE REFORMATION

#### CHAPTER IV

##### THE BASIC TRUTH OF THE REFORMATION STATED

###### INTRODUCTION

###### A. Introduction.

###### 1. The Purpose and Method of the Chapter.

What is the basic truth of the Reformation? This is the question which the second part of this study will seek to answer. By the basic truth is meant that central thing for which the Reformation stands. The question might be stated in various ways: What was its cardinal principle? What was the genius and aim of the Reformation? What was the chief reason for it? For what were the Reformers and their followers seeking?

It is the purpose of the present chapter to present a statement of the basic truth of the Reformation and then to show how it is confirmed in its two or perhaps three commonly recognized principles. The confirmation of the position stated in this chapter, involving research into the Reformation sources, will not only be given in this chapter but will also be developed in two succeeding chapters. As in the study of the central idea of religion, it was first defined and then confirmed, in a like manner this part of our thesis will be developed.

2. The Basic Truth of the Reformation Stated.

Schaff has stated it as follows: "The Reformation was at first a purely religious movement, and furnishes a striking illustration of the all-pervading power of religion in history. It started from the question: What must a man do to be saved: How shall a sinner be justified before God, and attain peace of his troubled conscience? .... The Reformation removed the obstructions which the papal church had interposed between Christ and the believer. It opened the door to direct union with him, as the only Mediator between God and man, and made his gospel accessible to every reader without the permission of a priest. It was a return to first principles, and for this very reason also a great advance. It was a revival of primitive Christianity, and at the same time a deeper apprehension and application of it than had been known before."(1)

Fisher in answering the question of the fundamental characteristic of this movement says: "Before, a vast institution had been interposed between the individual and the objects of religious faith and hope. The Reformation changed all this; it opened to the individual a direct access to the heavenly good proffered him in the Gospel."(2)

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(1) Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. VI, The German Reformation, pp. 15-16.

(2) Fisher: The Reformation, p. 7.

Lindsay in speaking of Luther's decision to enter the convent points out: "He was driven out of the world of human life and hope, where he was well-fitted to do a man's word, by the overwhelming pressure of a great practical need--anxiety to save his soul....The self-torturing cry, 'Oh, when wilt thou become holy and fit to obtain the grace of God?' drove him into the convent. He believed, and the almost unanimous opinion of his age agreed with him, that there, if anywhere, he could find peace he was seeking with such desperation."(1)

Another writer has stated the reason for the Reformation in similar terms: "Rome had ceased to have an adequate answer to the deepest religious instincts, the purest spiritual cravings of man's soul, namely, how to get directly into the presence of God and be at peace there."(2)

Prof. Jacobs in his "Story of the Church" declares that the Reformation "was more than a movement for church reform. It was a religious revolution. Its leaders.....had been raised in the Christianity of the middle ages, but it failed to satisfy their religious needs. In the New Testament, and especially in the

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(1)Lindsay: A History of the Reformation, Vol.I, The Reformation in Germany, pp. 426-427.

(2)R.J.Drummond: The Christians as Protestant, pp. 85-86.

Epistles of St. Paul, they found a gospel which brought them inner peace."(1)

Sheldon in the Introduction of his first volume on the Modern Church says that the fundamental cause of the Reformation "was intense religious conviction, enlightened and sustained by close contact with the Word of God."(2)

One of the best expressions of the basic truth of the Reformation is given by Muir in his book on the Arrested Reformation. "Hence it was that on its true and enduring side the Reformation was just a great revival of heart-religion, a movement born of the irresistible desire of souls, awakened to their true needs, to get near to God."(3)

It thus appears that the Reformation was concerned first of all with the relation of man to God, with the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God. It came to pass because the avenues of man's approach to the Infinite had been obstructed. In the face of that man's inner, religious nature cried out in its need and longing for that which would satisfy and bring peace to his heart. This, in brief, is the posi-

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(1) C.M. Jacobs: The Story of the Church, p.192.

(2) H.C. Sheldon: History of the Christian Church, Vol.III, Part I, p.2.

(3) William Muir: The Arrested Reformation, p.47.



tion advanced in the second part of this thesis: The basic truth of the Reformation was concerned with that which is central and fundamental in religion, the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God.

### 3. Inadequate and Erroneous Interpretations of the Reformation.

Since the above statement is an endeavor to get at the underlying principle or basic truth of the Reformation it is not intended to exclude other aspects which the Reformation took to itself in the course of its development. Manifestly, however, if the above statement of its basic idea is true, it does imply that interpretations which define it in terms other than those given are either partial or erroneous. They do not get at that which is the heart of the Reformation. They fail to do justice to the experience of the Reformers, that for which they stood, and that which accrued out of the Reformation in its more formal creedal statements. For instance, "the Reformation did not take its rise from a criticism of doctrines." To say that it was at heart a doctrinal controversy is to miss the inner spirit and truth of this movement.(1) There have been some who

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(1) See Lindsay, Vol. I, p. 426 ff. Harnack: History of Dogma, Vol. VII, p. 181, cites Loofs, saying that he makes the very accurate remark: "Luther's development in itself teaches that the Lutheran Reformation did not spring from a criticism of the ecclesiastical doctrine, that it was more than a revision of the ecclesiastical doctrinal system."

explain it as a revolt led by a drunken German monk. Pope Leo X., when he heard of what was going on in Germany, spoke of it as a squabble among the monks and the idea has been re-echoed by such writers as Bossuet and Voltaire.(1) That its principal cause was a conflict between Augustinian and Dominican monks, Fisher says, is "a little short of trifling".(2) To say that it was an endeavor to free Germany from the exactions of the Italians is to mistake the incidental for the essential. It is true that the complaint against these exactions was loud and undoubtedly well justified and that the opposition to Tetzels was one of the opening events of the Reformation.(3) Nor can it be justly affirmed that it was a revolt of the laity against the clergy as Froude chose to say. It is true that this entered into the movement but it could scarcely be said to comprise its basic truth.(4) There are those who say that it was the result of a political struggle between popes and emperors, brought on by the rising spirit of nationalism. While the political side of this movement is of great importance it is not its inner cause or basic truth. As Fisher goes on to say: "Political agencies were rather an

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{1} See Fisher: The Reformation, p. 3.

{2} Ibid.

{3} See D. Schaff: Our Fathers Faith and Ours, p. 57.

{4} Ibid., p. 58.

efficient auxiliary than a direct and principal cause."

(1) Then there are those who interpret it as a social and as an economic revolution. Indeed these also may have been contributing factors just as the political situation in a very real way contributed to its success and even though the Reformation had far-reaching social, economic, and political results, however, to make these the basic truth of the Reformation is to fail to understand the deeper significance of this movement. Even those who explain it as an effort to deliver human reason from the bonds of authority confine it within too narrow limits.(2) "The Reformation claimed to be a reform of religion; it was certainly a religious revolution; and religion is so great a concern of man and so deep and pervasive in its influence, that this distinctive feature of the Reformation must be held to belong to its essential character."(3)

James MacKinnon in the preface to the first of his four volumes on Luther and the Reformation in speaking of these other influences that were at work as Luther grew to manhood, says: "They unquestionably contributed indirectly to prepare the way for the great religious

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(1)Fisher: The Reformation, p. 4.

(2)Ibid., p. 4. Guizot in his General History of Civilization in Europe, lecture xii has presented this view.

(3)Ibid., p. 5.

transformation which he was instrumental in effecting. In this sense the Reformation was a co-operative and complex movement. Some historians have seen in it, in fact, largely if not solely, the play of these forces, and have been inclined to emphasize them to the extent of ignoring or belittling the religious and moral side of the movement. In so doing they have not adequately apprehended or correctly judged it. The Reformation was not simply a matter of politics, or economics, or social reform, or humanist culture. It was not even all these put together. Neither singly nor collectively would they have achieved the great religious transformation which Luther brought about. Without the religious conviction, the religious genius, the personal faith, the dynamic of a potent personality, there would have been no far-reaching Reformation of the Church. The attempt to explain the Reformation without this cardinal element is like the attempt to explain the action of an electric machine without the dynamo. As a religious movement the Reformation without Luther is unthinkable."<sup>(1)</sup> Luther and his religious experience must therefore be studied.

#### 4. The Plan of this Chapter.

It is customary to distinguish two fundamental

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(1) James MacKinnon: Luther and the Reformation, Vol. I, p. v.

or underlying principles of the Reformation. The first of these is that the supreme seat of religious authority is in the Holy Scriptures. This is known as the formal or objective principle. The second principle is that a man is justified by faith. This is known as the material or subjective principle.(1) Some historians speak of a third principle, that of the right of the individual believer to be his own priest before God. This is known as the social or ecclesiastical principle.(2) Upon examination it will be seen that this third is a sort of corollary of the first two. If the Scripture is made the supreme seat of authority it is dependent upon the right of private interpretation. It is not the right of a church, nor a priest, but it is the right of the individual himself. This is the priesthood of the believer. Again, if justification is by faith alone, the mediation of a priest or church is unnecessary. According to the Scriptures there is one Mediator, even Jesus Christ and the Reformers held that by faith in Him one may be his own priest and have direct access to the Father.

As these three principles are commonly recog-

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(1) Cf. P. Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 16; D. Schaff: Our Fathers Faith and Ours, p. 64; Lindsay, Vol. I, p. 426 ff; Fisher: The Reformation, p. 387.

(2) P. Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 16.

nized as expressing the fundamental truth of the Reformation it is the plan of this chapter to consider each of them in their fuller meaning and as expressing or confirming the basic truth of the Reformation as already set forth.

B. The Basic Truth of the Reformation Expressed in the Principle of the Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

This, the formal or objective principle of Protestantism, maintains that in the Bible as one is led in its interpretation by the Spirit of God, is to be found the only infallible rule of faith and practice. This is in opposition to the Roman doctrine which places scripture and ecclesiastical tradition on the same level and looks to an infallible church as the interpreter. It thus places an institution between the individual and the One revealed by the Scriptures.(1)

The Reformers did not reject the church but rather it was subordinated to the Word of God. Heretofore the church had refused the right to interpret for one's self. The Reformers asserted themselves in this matter defying the church, and their own experience verified the value and truth of their position. For as we shall see in the next chapter, this was the road that brought peace to the mind and heart of the great pioneer, Martin Luther. This inner satisfaction was

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(1) Cf. Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 16.

also fortified by the understanding which they gained when with a new confidence they dared to go into a critical examination of the text of the Scriptures.(1)

Luther's emphasis on the value of Scripture is felt in these words of his: "He who has made himself a master of the principles and text of the word, runs little risk of committing errors. A theologian should be thoroughly in possession of the basis and source of faith--that is to say, the Holy Scriptures. Armed with this knowledge it was that I confounded and silenced all my adversaries; for they seek not to fathom and understand the Scriptures; they run them over negligently and drowsily; they speak, they write, they teach, according to the suggestion of their heedless imagination. My counsel is, that we draw water from the true source and fountain, that is, that we diligently search the Scriptures. He who wholly possesses the text of the Bible, is a consummate divine. One single verse, one sentence of the text, is of far more instruction than a whole host of glosses and commentaries, which are neither strongly penetrating nor armour of proof."(2)

How the study of the Scriptures can bring one into that fellowship with God in which there is understanding, and freedom from the burden of sin is contained in another passage by Luther: "God alone, through his

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(1) Cf. Fisher: The Reformation, p. 389.

(2) Luther's Table-Talk, V. Hazlitt, p. 3.

word, instructs the heart, so that it may come to the serious knowledge how wicked it is, and corrupt and hostile to God. Afterwards God brings man to the knowledge of God, and how he may be freed from sin, and how, after this miserable, evanescent world, he may obtain life everlasting. Human reason, with all its wisdom, can bring it no further then to instruct people how to live honestly and decently in the world, how to keep house, build, etc., things learned from philosophy and heathenish books. But how they should learn to know God and his dear Son, Christ Jesus, and to be saved, this the Holy Ghost alone teaches through God's word; for philosophy understands nought of divine matters."(1) In a letter to John Lang at Erfurt, dated from Wittenberg, March 21, 1518, he mentions how "The students are remarkably tired of sophistical and antiquated studies and are truly desirous of the Holy Bible."(2)

Because Luther had himself been helped into a new state of peace and freedom as a Christian he was anxious to get the Scriptures into the hands of the people. He writes: "While the Romish Church stood, the Bible was never given to the people in such a shape that they could clearly, understandingly, surely, and

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(1)Luther's Table-Talk, Hazlitt, xlvi, p. 22.

(2)P.Smith: Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters, Vol.I, Letter 51, p. 75.



easily read it, as they now can in the German translation, which, thank God, we have prepared here at Wittenberg."(1)

We are told that, "In a few years Luther's version had more readers among the laity than ever the Latin Vulgate had among Priests."(2)

To show how Luther stood boldly for the right of private interpretation we cite the account of the Leipzig Disputation and note how Eck severely condemned the Reformer: "The reverend father glories that he speaks according to the divine law. Relying on his own understanding he flouts me because I follow the interpretation of the ancients. He insinuates that he will not follow Augustine and others who have said that Peter is the Rock, because their teaching is contradictory. I say, in reply, how does he dare to believe that so great a Father has taught contradictory things in the same book, in the same chapter, and in the same sentence? I leave others to judge how modestly and humbly he spoke when he promised by himself alone to stand up in opposition to so many Fathers. This is indeed the true Bohemian style, to profess to understand the Scriptures better than Popes, councils, doctors and universities, and that although the Holy Spirit has never deserted the Church.

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(1) Table-Talk, I, Hazlitt, p. 2.  
(2) Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 17.

Wonderful it would be if God has kept the truth concealed from so many saints and martyrs, waiting for the coming of the reverend father!"(1)

"In Bible history as the Reformers conceived it, we hear two voices--the voice of God speaking love to man, and the voice of the renewed man answering in faith to God. This communion is no dead thing belonging to a bygone past; it may be shared here and now.... Medieval theologians looked at the Bible as a sort of spiritual law-book, a storehouse of divinely communicated knowledge of doctrinal truths and rules for moral conduct--and nothing more. The Reformers saw in it a new home for a new life within which they could have intimate fellowship with God Himself--not merely knowledge about God, but actual communion with Him."(2)

The view of the Scriptures taken by Luther is here given as representative of that held by the other Reformers such as Zwingli and Calvin. Although there were points of difference they are not relevant to the essential truth to which we are calling attention here, namely, that in and through the Scriptures they were able by the leading of the Holy Spirit to find that

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(1) Opera Latina varii argumenti, supplement to Erlangen Edition of Luther's Latin works, in 7 vols, 3:73.

Cf. Vedder: The Reformation in Germany, p. 101.

(2)Lindsay: The Reformation in Germany, p. 453, 455, ff.

fellowship with God which only is able to satisfy the longing heart of man.

C. The Basic Truth of the Reformation Expressed in the Principle of Justification by Faith.

This, the material or subjective principle, maintains that man is justified by the free grace of God through a living faith in Christ, as the only and sufficient Saviour. This is in opposition to the Roman doctrine of (progressive) justification by faith and good works, as co-ordinate conditions of justification. Protestantism does not mean to imply that good works are unnecessary but rather that good works will be a natural result or evidence of the faith by which a man has been justified before God.(1)

For the purpose of this thesis, it is not essential that we go into the details of this doctrine, to trace its connection in the history of dogma, or to enter upon a detailed comparison of it and the doctrine

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(1) Cf. Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I, P. 206. Calvin, it may be said, goes back to God's eternal election as the ultimate ground of salvation and comfort in life and death. "But Luther and Calvin meant substantially the same thing, and agree in the more general proposition of salvation by free grace through living faith in Christ (Acts 4:12) in opposition to any Pelagian or Semipelagian compromise which divides the work and merit between God and man." Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. VI, p. 21.

held by the Roman Church. The interest of this study is the way that it reveals the basic truth of the Reformation and shows what the Reformers were seeking in religion. This will be further made evident by raising the question of what is meant by faith.

Luther himself tells us that "There are two kinds of believing: first, a believing about God which means that I believe that what is said of God is true. This faith is rather a form of knowledge than a faith. There is, secondarily, a believing in God which means that I put my trust in Him, give myself up to thinking that I can have dealings with Him, and believe without any doubt that He will be and do to me according to the things said of Him. Such faith, which throws itself upon God, whether in life or in death, alone makes a Christian man."(1)

This indeed had been the experience of Luther at the convent at Erfurt, and which he called into public action at Wittenberg and which made him the reformer that he was. We reserve the fuller treatment of Luther's experience until the next chapter but it is to be said here as has been said by another, "The secret of Luther's power and influence lies in his heroic faith".(2)

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(1)Luther's Works: Erlangen Edition, xxii.15. Cf. Lindsay, Vol.I, p. 429.

(2)Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol.VI,p.122.

In his Preface to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Luther has given a clear statement of his idea of faith which is worth noting: "Faith is a divine work in us, which transforms us and begets us anew from God (John 1:13), which crucifies the old Adam, makes us in heart, temper, disposition, and in all our powers entirely different men, and brings with it the Holy Spirit. O, this faith is a living, busy, active, powerful thing! It is impossible that it should not be ceaselessly doing that which is good. It does not even ask whether good works should be done; but before the question can be asked, it has done them, and it is constantly engaged in doing them. But he who does not do such works, is a man without faith. He gropes and casts about him to find faith and good works, not knowing what either of them is, and yet prattles and idly multiplies words about faith and good works. Faith is a living, well-founded confidence in the grace of God, so perfectly certain that it would die a thousand times rather than surrender its conviction. Such confidence and personal knowledge of divine grace makes its possessor joyful, bold, and full of warm affection toward God and all created things--all of which the Holy Spirit works in faith. Hence, such a man becomes without constraint willing and eager to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer all manner of ills, in order to please and to glorify God, who has shown toward him

such grace. It is thus impossible to separate works from faith--yea, just as impossible as to separate burning and shining from fire."(1)

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(1) Preface to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, by Dr. Martin Luther, translated by Rev. Charles E. Hay. Just preceding the statement which has been quoted he has spoken of the kind of faith which has been held by others, evidently referring to those of the Roman Church. He says: "Faith is not the human fancy and dream which some people mistake for faith. When such persons see that no amendment of the life and no good works follow, although they may hear and talk much about faith, they fall into error and declare that faith is not enough, but we must perform good works if we would be pious and attain salvation. In consequence of this, when they hear the Gospel, they fall to work and frame for themselves by their own powers a notion in their hearts which says, I believe. This they then consider true faith. But as it is a human invention and notion, of which the heart in its depths finds out nothing, it accomplishes also nothing and no amendment of the life follows."(p. 12-13)

At another time he has written: "They think that faith is a thing which they may have or not have at will, like any other natural human thing; so when they arrive at a conclusion and say, 'Truly the doctrine is correct, and therefore I believe it,' then they feel that no change has been wrought in themselves and in others, and that works do not follow, and they remain as before in the old nature, then they think that the faith is not good enough, but that there must be something more and greater."(See Luther's Works, the 2nd Erlangen Edition, xiii. 301)

Again in another trenchant passage he says: "When faith is of the kind that God awakens and creates in the heart, then a man trusts in Christ. He is then so securely founded on Christ that he can hurl defiance at sin, death, hell, the devil, and all God's enemies. He fears no ill, however hard and cruel it may prove to be. Such is the nature of true faith, which is utterly different from the faith of the sophists (the Schoolmen), Jews, and Turks. Their faith, produced by their thoughts, simply lights upon a thing, accepts it, believes that it is this or that. God has no dealings with such delusion; it is the work of man, and comes from nature, from the free will of man; and men possessing it can say, repeating

Lindsay in his discussion of faith as interpreted by Luther has a statement that is worth quoting in its entirety for the way in which it points out the significance of the Reformation principle of faith with respect to that which is our thesis: "This conception of what is meant by Christianity is the religious soul of the Reformation. It contains within it all the distinctively religious principles which inspired it. It can scarcely be called a dogma. It is an experience, and the phrases which a human soul has gone through. The thing itself is beyond exact definition--as all deep experiences are. It must be felt and gone through to be known. The Reformation started from this personal experience of the believing Christian, which it declared to be the one elemental fact in Christianity which could never be proved by argument and could never be dissolved away by speculation. It proclaimed the great truth, which had been universally neglected throughout the whole

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what others have said: I believe that there is a God. I believe that Christ was born, died, rose again for me. But what the real faith is, and how powerful a thing it is, of this they know nothing. (Ibid., xv.540)

He says again: "Wherefore, beware of that faith which is manufactured or imagined; for the true faith is not the work of man, and therefore the faith which is manufactured or imagined will not avail in death, but will be overcome and utterly overthrown by sin, by the devil, and by the pains of hell. The true faith is the heart's utter trust in Christ, and God alone awakens this in us. He who has it is blessed, he who has it not is cursed." (Ibid., xv.542)

period of medieval theology by everyone except the Mystics, that in order to know God man must be in living touch with God Himself. Therein lay its originality and its power. Luther rediscovered religion when he declared that the truly Christian man must cling directly and with a living faith to the God Who speaks to him in Christ, saying, 'I am thy salvation.' The earlier Reformers never forgot this. Luther proclaimed his discovery, he never attempted to prove it by argument; it was self-evident--seen and known when experienced."(1)

What has been called the doctrine of Justification by Faith is, then, the description of a religious experience within the believer. This faith rests upon the historical Christ and being the gift of God makes man to see the practical meaning in the fact of the historic Christ. The believer having this faith--faith which is a gift of God and which regenerates life--becomes regenerate and is a member of the Christian fellowship "and is able to do good works and actually does them, (and) does not find his standing as a person justified in the sight of God, his righteousness, his assurance of pardon and salvation, in those good works which he really can do, but only in the mediatorial and perfectly righteous work of Christ which he has

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(1)Lindsay, Vol.I, p. 431-432.



learned to appropriate in faith". This justification "is an act, but an act of God; and divine acts are never done and done with, they are always continuous."(1)

Luther in his Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, in commenting upon 2:16--"that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law"--says in part: "It is a high and excellent matter to be at peace with God, and therefore, in this case, we have need of a far other mediator than Moses or the law. Here we must be nothing at all, but only receive the treasure, which is Christ, and apprehend him in our hearts by faith, although we feel ourselves to be never so full of sin." In commenting on the preceding phrase of the verse he speaks of Christ: "Christ is not the law; he is not my charity, my obedience, my poverty; but he is the Lord of life and death, a mediator, a saviour, a redeemer of those that are under the law and sin. In him we are by faith, and he in us. The bridegroom must be alone with the bride in his secret chamber, all the servants and family being put apart. But afterwards, when the door is open, and he cometh forth, then let the servants and handmaidens return to minister unto them: then let charity do her office, and let good works be done."(2)

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(1)Lindsay, Vol.I, p. 446-447.

(2)Luther: Commentary on Galatians, 2:16.

Thus it is that the second of these Reformation principles bears out in another way that which was stated in the opening of this chapter as the basic truth of the Reformation. It is concerned with how man comes into fellowship with God, how he becomes free from his burden of sin and the weight of fear about his past life, how he finds peace and communion with the Infinite, and how he is enabled to remain in fellowship with God, living the life of faith whose natural expression cannot help but be in good works.

As we shall see in the following chapter, when this really became the experience of Luther it was like a new revelation. In the Bible he **had found life**, he had found Christ, and through **him had entered into communion** with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.(1) It became to him a book of life and comfort. "He felt relieved of the terrible load of guilt by an act of free grace. He was led out of the dark prison house of self-inflicted penance into the daylight and fresh air of God's redeeming love. Justification broke the fetters of legalistic slavery, and filled him with the joy and peace of the state of adoption; it opened to him the

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(1)Harnack in his History of Dogma, Vol.VII, p. 171, says of Luther that "he was only in one thing great and powerful, captivating and irresistible, the master of his age, matching victoriously ahead of the history of a thousand years with the view of inducing his generation to relinquish the paths that were being

very gates of heaven."(1) Justification by faith "is the very soul of evangelical Protestantism".(2) The proclamation or perhaps the restoration of this doctrine was in a sense Luther's contribution to the Reformation and it became in turn a cardinal principle of that movement.

Harnack says of Luther in this regard: "The same man who delivered the gospel of Jesus Christ from ecclesiasticism and moralism strengthened its authority in the forms of the Old Catholic theology, nay, was the first to impart again to these forms meaning and importance for faith, after they had for long centuries remained inoperative. From the time of Athanasius there had been no theologian who had given so much living power for faith to the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ as Luther did; since the time of Cyril no teacher had arisen in the Church for whom the mystery of the union of the two natures in Christ was so full of comfort as for Luther--"I have better provider than all angels are: He lies in the cradle, and hangs on the breast of a virgin, but sits, nevertheless, at the right of God, the almighty Father'; no mystic philosopher of antiquity

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followed and to choose paths that were new--he was only great in the re-discovered knowledge of God which he derived from the gospel, i.e., from Christ."

(1) Schaff, Vol.VI, p. 123.  
(2) Ibid., p. 21.

spoke with greater conviction and delight than Luther of the sacred nourishment of the Eucharist. The German Reformer restored life to the formulae of Greek Christianity; he gave them back to faith. It is to be attributed to him that till the present day these formulae are in Protestantism a living power for faith--yes, only in Protestantism. Here there is a living in them, a defending or contesting of them; but even those contesting them understand how to estimate their relative title. In the Catholic Churches they are a lifeless possession."(1)

And all this was because the Reformers ventured into the Scriptures and allowed them to speak directly to them without the use of the Church, the fathers, or tradition as interpreters. This brings us to the third principle which bears a close relation to both of those already considered, the Priesthood of the Believer.

D. The Basic Truth of the Reformation Expressed in the Principle of the Priesthood of Believers.

The third principle which has been called the social or ecclesiastical principle of the Reformation, maintains that "God Himself gave the believer the power to throw himself directly on God!" Lindsay says further: "Medieval Christians believed with more or less distinctness that the supernatural life of the soul was created,

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(1)Harnack: History of Dogma, Vol. VII, p. 173-174.

nourished, and perfected through the sacraments, and that the priests administering them possessed, in virtue of ordination, miraculous powers where by they daily offered the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the altar, forgave the sins of men, and taught the truths of salvation with divine authority."(1) As shall be shown in the next chapter, it was Luther's own religious experience that led him to proclaim the liberty of the Christian man. He as a sinner had tried in vain the methods of "monkery" in order to attain that fellowship which his very being craved, but when he simply threw himself upon God as revealed in Christ Jesus the Saviour he received forgiveness and found that satisfaction for which he longed, as the subsequent events of his life testify.

The close relation of this principle to that of Justification by Faith and the Authority of the Holy Scriptures is evident.(2) Harnack says that: "From the standpoint of faith he(Luther) likewise overthrew the whole hierarchical and priestly Church system. His negative criticism in this department does not suffer from the slightest want of clearness. Through justification by faith every Christian is a Christian with full rights

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{1} Lindsay, Vol.I. p. 438.

{2} Indeed Lindsay, p. 444 says that "Almost all the distinctive principles of the Reformation group themselves around this one thought of the Priesthood of all Believers."

and privileges; nothing stands between him and his God; the Church, again, is the community of believers, visible through the preaching of the Word--nothing else."(1)

The significance of this principle is seen when it is viewed in its historic background, when one considers the power that had been permitted to develop in the priesthood. The priesthood was supposed to be able to open or to bar to any one the way to God. When one felt sorrow for sin he was to go to a man and confess the sin to him because he was a priest. When one wished comfort, it was not sought directly from God, but through a priest. Then there was the system of sacraments which the Reformers felt had further built up a wall of partition. These could only be given by the priests, and could be withheld by them. "These ceremonies were not the signs and promises of the free grace of God, under whose wide canopy, as under that of heaven, man lived his spiritual life. There were jealously guarded doors from out of which grudgingly, and commonly not without fees, the priests dispensed the free grace of God."(2) The Pope held the power and not infrequently exercised it to place a town, a district, or a whole country under an interdict which meant that the priests were to refuse the sacraments to the people. Such meant spiritual death

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(1)Harnack, Vol. VII, p. 220.  
(2)Lindsay, Vol. I, p. 439.

to the district upon which it fell. In the minds of the people it was as much to be feared as the worst of the plagues. An interdict made the plainest intellect see, understand, and shudder at the awful and mysterious powers which a mediatorial priesthood was said to possess."(1)

Perhaps the best and fullest exposition of this principle is that which came from the pen of the German Reformer himself in the tract entitled, "Christian Liberty" and dedicated to Pope Leo X. Luther says: "One thing, and one alone, is necessary for life, justification, and Christian liberty; and that is the most holy word of God, the Gospel of Christ.....There is no more cruel stroke of the wrath of God than when He sends a famine of hearing his word,.....namely, the Gospel of God, concerning his Son, incarnate, suffering, risen, and glorified through the Spirit, the sanctifier. To preach Christ is to feed the soul, to justify it, to set it free, and to save it, if it believes the preaching. For faith alone, and the efficacious use of the word of God, brings salvation.....Hence it is clear that, as the soul needs the word alone for life and justification, so it is justified by faith alone and not by any works."(2)

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(1) Lindsay, Vol.I, p. 439 ff.

(2) Luther: Christian Liberty, p. 8-9.

A few pages later in speaking of the promises of the New Testament, he says: "Now since these promises of God are words of holiness, truth, righteousness, liberty, and peace, and are full of universal goodness; the soul which cleaves to them with a firm faith, is so united to them, that it not only partakes in, but is penetrated and saturated by, all their virtue. For if the touch of Christ was healing, how much more does that most tender spiritual touch, nay, absorption of the word, communicate to the soul all that belongs to the word. In this way, therefore, the soul, through faith alone, without works, is from the word of God justified, sanctified, endued with truth, peace, and liberty, and filled full with every good thing, and is truly made the child of God; as it is said: 'To them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name' (John 1:12)"(1)

One of the "incomparable" graces of faith mentioned by Luther is that "it unites the soul to Christ, as the wife to the husband; by which mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul are made one flesh".  
(2) "Thus the believing soul, by the pledge of its faith in Christ, becomes free from all sin, fearless of death, safe from hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness,

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(1) Luther: Christian Liberty, p. 13 f.  
(2) Ibid., p. 17.



life and salvation of its husband Christ."(1)

Again he says that through our inestimable power and liberty as Christians we are "priests forever, a dignity far higher than kingship, because by that priesthood we are worthy to appear before God, to pray for others, and to teach one another mutually the things which are of God. For these are the duties of priests, and they cannot possibly be permitted to any unbeliever. Christ has obtained for us this favor, if we believe in Him, that, just as we are His brethren, and co-heirs and fellow-kings with Him, so we should be also fellow-priests with Him, and venture with confidence, through the spirit of faith, to come into the presence of God, and cry, 'Abba, Father!' and to pray for one another, and to do all things which we see done and figured in the visible and corporeal office of priesthood."(2)

One other reference will suffice to show how underlying all of this there was the earnest reaching out for that fellowship with God. In speaking of how good works should be a natural expression of the good man who is possessed by faith, he says: "Just as our neighbor is in want, and has need of our abundance, so we, too, in the sight of God were in want, and had need of his mercy. And as our heavenly Father has freely helped us in Christ, so ought we freely to help our neighbor by our body and works, and each should become

to others a sort of Christ, so that we may be mutually Christ's, and that the same Christ may be in all of us; that is that we may be truly Christians."(1)

The principle of the Priesthood of the Believer was the principle which delivered men from the vague fear of the clergy, and was the spur to incite them to the much needed reformation of the Church. Since this principle cleared the way for the believer to come directly into fellowship with God, it is in line with the basic truth of the Reformation, namely, the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between God and man. Being this, it was thus a return to the central idea of religion.

#### E. Conclusion

The question with which this chapter opened and about which the second part of this study is concerned is: What is the basic truth of the Reformation? It was stated to be the attaining and maintaining of fellowship with God. It was concerned with vital personal religion. When the three Reformation principles are

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- (1) Luther: Christian Liberty, p. 23.
- (2) Ibid.

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- (1) Luther: Christian Liberty, p. 42.

considered in this light, we believe that it has been shown that back of each of them was the desire to find and to have fellowship with God. One of the great discoveries of Luther was that he found God in and through the Scriptures, for there he found Christ. When the Scriptures were allowed to speak their message directly to the human heart without the Church interposing its hindering and burdensome interpretations upon them, there was found in them the supreme authority on all matters pertaining thereto, thus subordinating the ecclesiastical system to the word of God. In the Scriptures they heard God speaking to man. Through the Scriptures they had not merely knowledge about God but actual communion and fellowship with Him.

By the second principle, Justification by Faith alone, the basic truth of the Reformation as stated above, is confirmed even to a greater degree. In taking this stand the Reformers were insisting that the good life is possible only as it is the natural by-product of a living faith in Christ as the only and sufficient Saviour, which faith was the free gift of God himself. It is evident that this depended upon and resulted in the close relation of heavenly Father and earthly child. It was fellowship between man and God. Faith was a religious experience. It brought the human soul into communion with the Divine Being.

In like manner the third principle, the Priesthood of the Believer, had as its underlying significance the opening of the door that led directly to the presence of the one with whom the human spirit longs to have fellowship. God gave the believer the power and the privilege to throw himself directly upon God. Nothing was to stand between man and God. The Christian life was a life of closest fellowship in which God in Christ and the Holy Spirit is with man and in man. "Christ and the soul are made one flesh", as Luther said. The believer thus becomes his own priest.

Harnack has something of a summary statement of Luther's experience, especially down to 1517 which is much to the point here and which suggests our next chapter: "That which he had experienced.....was, in comparison with the manifold things which his Church offered as religion, above everything else an immense reduction, an emancipating simplification.....That reduction meant nothing else than the restoration of religion: seeking God and finding God. Out of a complex system of expiations, good deeds and comfortings, of strict statutes and uncertain apportionments of grace, out of magic and of blind obedience, he led religion forth and gave it a strenuously concentrated form. The Christian religion is living assurance of the living God, who has revealed Himself and opened his

heart in Christ--nothing else."(1)

Schaff also has a statement which sums up this chapter and presents the basic truth of the Reformation: "The Reformation opened the door to direct union with Christ, as the only Mediator between God and man, and made his gospel accessible to every reader.....The three principles resolve themselves into the one principle of evangelical freedom, or freedom, in Christ. The ultimate aim of evangelical Protestantism is to bring every man into living union with Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour from sin and death."(2)

We are now ready to enter into the study of the religious experience of the Reformers to see whether or not that which has been stated as the basic truth of the Reformation is true with regard to its development in their own lives.

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(1)Harnack: History of Dogma, Vol. VII, p. 183.

(2)Schaff: Vol. VI, p. 16.

CHAPTER V

THE BASIC TRUTH OF THE REFORMATION ILLUSTRATED  
IN  
THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE REFORMERS

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A. Introduction.

1. The Basic Truth of the Reformation Anticipated  
before the Reformers.

Upon entering the consideration of the religious experience of the Reformers, it is well to make the observation that the movement which came to pass in the sixteenth century had roots extending back into at least the two centuries preceding. The Reformation was not a thing apart from its preparatory background. These two centuries would be a very profitable field for research in connection with the subject of this thesis; however, this thesis does not propose to enter at length into that period. It will be adequate for our present purpose simply to enumerate some of those things which indicate the outworking of those things which found their full expression in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It has been said that "There is scarcely a principle or doctrine of the Reformation which was not anticipated or advocated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries."(1) There had been efforts within the Church

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(1)Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 13. Pfleiderer in his Philosophy

itself toward reform, such as those marked by the Reformatory Councils of Pisa, Constance, and Basel. There had been the Renaissance in which there was a general intellectual awakening with a revival of classical literature. There had been a renewed interest in the scriptures in which Erasmus and Reuchlin were leaders. The humanists had helped to set man in his proper sphere in this world.(1) Then there had been the Albigensian and

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of Religion, Vol. II, p. 321, in speaking of the defects of the Medieval Church and its system, says: "But what was meant to be a means (the Church, priests, saints, sacraments, ceremonies) became a partition-wall which separated man from God, and made impossible to him that certainty of salvation in the fellowship of God for which the pious heart longs. Against this religious defect of the Catholic ecclesiasticism deep-natures had already long sought help in mysticism, the religion of pious feeling, which withdraws itself from all the externality of the Church into the inwardness of one's own self, and seeks to make one's self certain of unity with God in self-denial, humility, tranquillity."

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(1)Pfleiderer says, (p. 322): "The reaction against the moral faults of the secularized Church, which had partly sprung from the unnatural life of the asceticism of the monks, and partly from the covetousness and ambition of the hierarchy, started from the secular enlightenment of the Renaissance, which, following the example of the ancients, became enthusiastic for the beauty of nature and art and for the freedom of the national State, and opposed these ancient ideals energetically and passionately to the ascetic hierarchical ideal of the Church. But this secular culture was lacking both in moral earnestness and in religious warmth and depth. It indeed overwhelmed monkery and priestcraft with the arrows of its ridicule, but the root of the evil was not reached by it; and for the practical conflict with the existing



the Waldensian revolts. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are marked by a social awakening and a rising spirit of nationalism. Notwithstanding the amount of laxity and irreligion abroad there was to be found a great deal of family and popular religious life. The German mystics in the north were an evidence that the people of Europe were searching for something <sup>deeper</sup> and more satisfying. There were those who have even been called the "Reformers before the Reformation", Wycliff in England, John Huss in Bohemia, Savonarola in Florence, and Wessel, Goch, and Wesel in Northern Germany. Wycliff has been called the "Morning Star of the Reformation".

- (1) "The innermost life of the Church was pressing forward to the new era.....The fuel was abundant all over Europe, but it required the spark which would set it ablaze."(2) In cloister, in homes, even in the Church,

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ecclesiastical powers it wanted the enthusiastic courage which only a religious conviction can give. What made Luther a Reformer was the fact that through severe inner conflicts he had won a deep religious conviction which made him strong to defy a whole world."

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- (1) Schaff, Vol. V, Part II, p. 314 ff.  
(2) Schaff, Vol. VII, p. 13 ff. Rowe in his Modern Pathfinders of Christianity in speaking of the times in which Luther was born, says: "Germany at that time was a loosely organized empire of almost independent states under the leadership of the Austrians. Its people had a reputation for piety. Most of them were unremitting in attention to the claims of the Church;

and elsewhere there were many signs that the people were hungry for fellowship with God. As Hagenbach has remarked: "Luther's convent cell was not the only one in

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here and there a few met for prayer and Bible study in groups of Brethren, as they called themselves, that they might learn the meaning of personal religion. The Renaissance had come to Germany, and with it a new interest in the Bible and in the individual. The time was ripe for a masterful leader, who would articulate the thought of those who were meditating upon religion."(p.40)

Hagenbach in his History of the Reformation in Germany and Switzerland, Vol. I, p. 77, gives the following interesting anecdote depicting the religious situation of the early fifteenth century and how Luther came on the scene and set the movement, already prepared for, going. He is not able to trace it to its origin and cannot be sure of its authority but true or false it is a striking description of what happened: "While the Emperor Charles V. was in attendance at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, some persons (so the story runs) were announced who desired that they might be allowed to perform, for the after-dinner amusement of the emperor and his brother Ferdinand, a dumb comedy, or pantomime. Permission being granted them, there first appeared on the scene a masked individual, habited in the ordinary garb of a doctor, and having the name Capnio (the Greek name of Reuchlin) written on his back. He carried a bundle of straight and crooked sticks, which he threw down in the middle of the room, and retired. He was followed by another person, clad as a secular ecclesiastic, and bearing the name of Erasmus, who endeavored to arrange the scattered sticks in an orderly manner, and to bend the crooked ones straight. Perceiving the fruitlessness of the attempt, however, he shook his head with vexation and departed. Upon this there appeared, in the attire of a monk, Dr. Martin Luther, who set fire to the crooked sticks, and when the flame shot up withdrew. Next entered a person dressed as the emperor, who, when he saw the fire consuming the crooked sticks, thrust at it with his sword, which, instead of extinguishing the flame, did but fan it into great violence. Finally the pope appeared. Clasping his hands above his head in terror, he looked about for means to quench the conflagration. At some distance

which fierce conflicts of conscience were waged amid prayers and tears."(1) This explains something of why Martin Luther, much to his own surprise, found himself the spokesman of a multitude of souls. Thus it was that the times before the Reformation anticipated that which was its basic truth.

## 2.The Purpose of this Chapter.

The purpose of this chapter and its place in the plan of this thesis is to show how the basic truth of the Reformation, as stated in the chapter preceding, is illustrated and confirmed in the religious experience of the Reformers; to show how their religious experience centered in and turned upon their search for and attainment of fellowship with God. The Reformation in its beginnings was not doctrinal but experimental. "Luther rediscovered religion when he declared that the truly Christian man must cling directly and with a living faith to the God who speaks to him in Christ, saying, 'I am thy salvation'. The earlier Reformers never

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stood two pails, one filled with oil and the other with water. In his anxiety he seized the oil and poured it upon the flame. The fire gained ground; the actors availed themselves of the confusion which arose among the spectators to make good their escape, and when inquiry was made for them they were nowhere to be found."

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(1)Hagenbach: History of the Reformation, Vol.I, p. 43.

forgot this. Luther proclaimed his discovery, he never attempted to prove it by argument; it was something self-evident--seen and known when experienced..... Luther headed a Reformation because men felt and knew that he had, as he said, found a gracious God by trusting in the grace of God revealed to him in Christ Jesus."

(1) Thus the Reformation in its central truth may be looked at in the experience of its principal leaders. Therefore it is the purpose of this chapter, not to write a biography of Luther, Zwingli, or Calvin, but rather to study their religious experience in order to get at that which was its central factor or guiding idea.

### 3.The Plan and Scope of this Chapter.

Although there were a great many who might be classed as "reformers", however, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin are commonly regarded as the principal leaders. Luther was the first great herald of the Reformation in Germany; in Switzerland Zwingli appeared about the same time as Luther; Zwingli died on the battlefield of Cappel(1531) but the Reformation went on under Calvin who gave fixed form to the doctrine of the Reformed Church. It might be added that Knox of Scotland

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(1)Lindsay, Vol. I, pp. 432,435.

under the influence of Calvin became the leader in his country and exerted a powerful influence upon the church in England as well. However for the purpose of this study Knox is of lesser importance and will not be included.

It is proposed therefore, to study the religious experience of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin because the Reformation centers in the lives and works of these three leaders.

One further delimitation. Of the three leading Reformers, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, it is quite generally conceded that Martin Luther is representative of that for which the Reformation stands. Harnack, speaking of those years from 1519-1523, says that, "In those years Luther was lifted above himself, and seemed to transcend the limits of his peculiar individuality-- he was the Reformation, inasmuch, as he summed up in himself what was at once implied in the return to Pauline Christianity and in the founding of a new age." (1) The opening lines of the Preface to the first volume of MacKinnon's on "Luther and the Reformation" are these: "The evangelical Reformation of the sixteenth century is unthinkable without Luther. As a religious movement it owed its origin directly to him and it bears

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(1)Harnack, Vol. VII, p. 170.

the stamp of his personality and his religious experience."(1) Schubert in his "Outlines of Church History", says that "The process by which Christianity was traced back to its original and simple forms started in the secret experiences of the soul of one man, Luther."(2) From the time that Tetzel entered Saxony with his Indulgences for sale, "from this time to the year 1521, even to 1525, the movement is identical with the history of Luther."(3) Walker in his work on the Reformation remarks: "Martin Luther, from whom this protest came, is one of the heroic figures not merely of the Reformation age, but of all history. Without him the Reformation would have been delayed, or might have run a vastly different course. He is one of the few men of whom it may unhesitatingly be said that he made the world other than it would have been had he not done his work. Before the towering personality of this leader of the Reformation age all other reformers seem relatively insignificant."(4)

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(1) MacKinnon: Luther and the Reformation, Vol.I, Preface p. iii.

(2) Schubert: Outlines of Church History, p. 251.

(3) Ibid., p. 253. Cf. Vedder also: The Reformation in Germany, p. 3. Cf. Phillips Brooks: Essays and Addresses, p. 380: "Luther would ever be the last to claim that he created any great movement of humanity under the will of God. And yet if ever one man's personality was prominent and powerful in a great crisis, it was his here."

(4) W.Walker: The Reformation, In the Ten Epoch Series, p. 77.

Therefore, in that which follows a greater consideration will be given to the religious experience of Luther than to either that of Zwingli or Calvin. Luther is taken as representative; the others will be treated as confirmatory.

B. The Basic Truth of the Reformation Illustrated in the Religious Experience of Martin Luther.

1. The Developing Stages of Luther's Religious Experience.

The full scope of the life of Luther may be seen in the following brief analysis. His life may be divided into six periods as follows:

- a. His youth and young manhood--to and including his entrance into the convent. 1483-1505.
- b. His spiritual struggle as monk, professor, and preacher--to and including the posting of the Ninety-five Theses. 1505-1517.
- c. The Liberty of the Christian man--to and including the burning of the papal bull of excommunication. 1517-1520.
- d. The decisive crisis--to and including the Diet of Worms. 1520-1521.
- e. The constructive period--to and including the Augsburg Confession. 1521-1530.
- f. The culmination of his life and achievements--to and including the Peace of Augsburg. 1530-1555.

From this analysis it will be seen that for the purpose of this thesis in getting at the basic truth of the Reformation, we are primarily concerned with the two earlier periods and particularly the two formative acts which terminate those periods. It is during these two periods that Luther goes through the spiritual struggle which at last brings him into fellowship with God

in Christ for which his soul had been seeking. The other periods of his life are but confirmatory of that which came to pass in the earlier years. Attention therefore, will be centered upon his entrance into the convent and on the testimony of the Ninety-five Theses to his religious experience.

## 2. Luther's Entrance into the Convent at Erfurt.

On July 17, 1506 Martin Luther presented himself for admission at the door of the Augustinian Convent at Erfurt. This decision to become a monk was one of the steps which brought him to the turning point of his religious experience.

In order to understand that which later made him such a potent influence as a Reformer it is pertinent to ask, why did Luther forsake his study of law and enter the monastery? Upon the answer to this question his biographers are by no means agreed. And it is beyond the scope of this study to enter upon a consideration of the various opinions held with regard to this question. However there are certain circumstances surrounding his entrance which aid in understanding the spiritual struggle which took place in the Augustinian Convent.

Luther was brought up in a simple God-fearing peasant home. His parents were honest, pious, and



industrious people. In a letter which Luther wrote to Melanchthon in later years he said: "I am a peasant's son. My father, my grandfather, all my ancestors, were thorough peasants. My father was a poor miner."(1)

Luther's parents were quite strict with him and sometimes quite harsh, for he tells us: "My father once flogged me so severely that I fled from him and it was hard for him to win me back."(2) And again: "My mother once flogged me on account of a nut, till the blood flowed."

(3) Yet in later years Luther spoke of his parents with the greatest respect. When the news of his father's death was brought to him, he recalled with expressions of grief his "most tender affection" and the "very delightful intercourse" enjoyed with him. He confessed: "Through him my Creator gave to me whatever I am and have; through his toils the Father of mercies supported me and moulded me such as I am."(4)

With regard to the religious experiences of his youth, besides being brought up in the pious atmosphere of his home where he probably learned the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments(5), he had read some of the Bible, yet he probably knew only those

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(1) Letter to Melanchthon, De Wette, 4:33, Cf. Vedder, p.3.

(2) "Colloquia" ii.76. Cf. MacKinnon Vol.I, p.3.

(3) Ibid., ii. 129. Cf. MacKinnon Vol.I, p.3

(4) Luther's Briefe, De Wette, 4:129. Cf. Kostlin: The Theology of Luther, Vol.I, p.5.

(5) See MacKinnon, Vol.I, p.5.

portions that were prescribed in the church services; for it was not until after he had been in the university that he really made the discovery of the entire Bible and not until after he had been in the monastery that he found it to be the book of life.(1)

With regard to his decision to enter the monastery in 1505 there was at least one experience with monastic life which he had had as a boy that made a deep impression on him, for in 1533 he wrote of it thus: "When, in my fourteenth year, I went to school at Magdeburg, I saw with my own eyes a prince of Anhalt.....who went in a friar's cowl on the highways to beg bread, and carried a sack like a donkey, so heavy that he bent under it, but his companion walked by him without a burden; this prince alone might serve as an example of the grisly, shorn holiness of the world, They had so stunned him that he did all the works of the cloister like any other brother, and he had so fasted, watched, and mortified his flesh that he looked like a death's head, mere skin and bones; indeed he soon died, for he could not long bear such a severe life. In short, whoever looked at him had to gasp for pity and must needs be ashamed of his own worldly position."(2)

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(1) See below.

(2) Defense before Duke George. Erlangen Edition, 31:239 ff. See Preserved Smith: Martin Luther, p.4.

In the years of his schooling at Mansfield, at Magdeburg, and at Eisenach he was a diligent and apt student. It was at the latter place that as a boy singing in the streets to make his living he found such a good friend in Frau Cotta, who took him into her own home, because she had been so impressed by his "singing and praying".(1) In 1501 Luther became a student at the University of Erfurt. Of his life as a student little is known. Historians are fairly well agreed that he lived the right kind of a life while in school. "That it was pure and godly may be inferred from the fact that his enemies never found any reproach in it and because of the absence of self-accusation."(2) However there are two things worth noting in passing. It was during this time that he learned to play the lute which became a lifelong joy for him. It gave him an appreciation of music and so aided the development of his talents along that line so that later he was able to express his religious experience in hymns. Luther is well known as a

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- (1) See Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 109. From her he learned the words: "There is nothing dearer in this world than the love of woman."
- (2) Preserved Smith: Martin Luther, p. 6. See also McGiffert: Martin Luther, p. 13; also Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 111. says: "His moral conduct was unblemished; and the mouth of slander did not dare to blacken his reputation till after the theological passions were aroused by the Reformation. He went regularly to mass and observed the daily devotions of a sincere Catholic. He chose for his motto: to pray well is half the study. He was a devout worshipper of the Virgin Mary."

hymn writer.(1) The other significant experience was his contact with the Bible. In his Table Talk he tells us: "I was twenty years old before I had ever seen the Bible. I had no notion that there existed any other gospels or epistles than those in the service. At least I came across a Bible in the library at Erfurt, and used often to read it to Dr.Staupitz, with still increasing wonder."(2) Yet it was not until after he had been a resident of the convent for some time that his discovery of the Bible became important to him in bringing him fellowship with God.

Luther's religious experience during his university days was that which was natural and such as the Church of his day would produce. Yet after he had taken his bachelor of arts degree in 1502 and his master of arts degree in 1505, and had begun the study of law in accordance with the wish of his father, very suddenly he turned from law and entered the Augustinian Convent at Erfurt.(3) This in opposition to his father, and

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- (1) Haas in the Introduction to Lambert's work on Luther's Hymns, says of the great Reformer that he was "the father of Evangelical song.....In Luther's hymns there appears the full message of the Gospel..... Through them the Evangelical truth sang its way into the hearts of people....They mirror the quiet moments of Luther's life and show the inner peace amidst the continuous strife....Luther's hymns have, therefore, a real value for the understanding of the life and faith of the great Reformer."(p. xviii) See also McGiffert, p.13.
- (2) Given by Chalmers in his Memoir in Hazlitt's Edition of Luther's Table-Talk, p. xxvii. Cf. P.Smith: Martin Luther, p.6.
- (3) See p.Smith: Martin Luther, p.6.

not what one would expect from one who had not been so favorably impressed by monastic life in his early days, and to the surprise of his friends, he became a monk.

This then is the religious background of the Reformer. This sudden decision has long been a much discussed question amongst the biographers of Luther and it is not our purpose to take sides in this discussion. However in view of the tremendous spiritual struggle which raged within him as an inmate of the monastery, there are several statements from his own lips and from those of his friends that have a direct bearing upon the sudden change in his course; and they are significant because they mark the beginning of that struggle which resulted in a great new experience of fellowship with God.

One of the most authentic sources of information about his decision to become a monk is a letter written to his father in 1521. Luther himself says: "It is almost sixteen years since I took the monastic vows, without your knowledge or consent.....I well remember telling you that I was called through a terrible apparition from heaven, so that, when face to face with death, I made the vow; and you exclaimed, 'God grant it was not an apparition of the Evil One that startled you.'"(1)

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(1)Smith and Jacobs: Luther's Correspondence, Vol.II, Letter 513, p. 66 f.

In a letter to Melanchthon in the same year he makes a similar reference: "I was forced, more than drawn into making this vow, for God so wills it."(1) Many of his biographers are of the opinion that this is a reference to the experience which is given more fully in his Table Talk.

The story is that on July 2, 1505, when he was returning to Erfurt from a visit to Mansfield, being overtaken by a terrific thunderstorm, a flash of lightning prostrated him to the ground and in his terror of sudden death he vowed a vow to St. Anna that he would become a monk.(2) It has also been pointed out that the terrible plague which occurred in Erfurt in the spring and early summer of 1505 may have been an influential factor in this decision.(3) It would only be natural that Luther's thoughts would turn to the other world at such a time. That his sudden decision was not altogether a matter of physical fright but that it was the development within him of the desire for fellowship with a gracious God as he himself at a later time suggests is seen in these words: "I was for fifteen years a monk, besides the time I had lived before that--and

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(1) Quoted by McKinnon from Enders, iii. 223.

(2) See Köstlin, p. 47; Preserved Smith: Martin Luther, p. 9; MacKinnon, p. 32.

(3) See P. Smith: Martin Luther, p. 9.

yet I was never able to draw comfort from my baptism, but always thought: O, when will you ever become pious and do enough to make God gracious to you? And it was such thoughts that drove me to become a monk."(1) When Luther entered the monastery at Erfurt he did so because of his early training as a Catholic youth had kept him in the path of the religion of his day, and because he was overwhelmed with the vanity of this life and the importance of saving his soul. It was in accordance with the prevailing notion of his age that the fellowship with God for which man longed could best be found in the quiet retreat of the cloister.

### 3. Luther's Religious Struggle and his Attainment of Fellowship with God.

After a year's probation, during which Luther showed himself to be an earnest and able novitiate, in September 1506 he took upon himself the irrevocable vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. As a monk with unremitting energy he gave himself to those exercises by which it was supposed that sin could be crucified, perfect holiness attained, and the grace of God won.

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(1) Erlangen Edition, xvi, 90. See Köstlin: The Theology of Luther, p. 46. MacKinnon is inclined to doubt this passage because of its being edited from notes by Röhrer which to him at this point seem unintelligible. See MacKinnon, p. 34, Vol. I.

It appears that during the first two years in the monastery, at least until the time of his ordination as a priest in 1507, his confidence in the usual method by which he hoped to find fellowship with God still remained. The best evidence of this is the letter which he wrote on April 22nd of that year to his friend John Braun at Eisenach, inviting him to be present at the occasion of the celebration of his first mass. It is the first extant letter of Luther. He says in part:

"....God glorious and holy in all his works, has designed to exalt me, wretched and unworthy sinner, and to call me into his sublime ministry, only for his mercy's sake. I ought to be thankful for the glory of such divine goodness(as much as dust may be) and to fulfil the duty laid upon me.

"Wherefore the fathers have set aside the Sunday Cantate(May 2) for my first mass, God willing. That day I shall celebrate mass before God for the first time, the day chosen for the convenience of my father. To this I made bold to invite you, kind friend, but certainly not as though I were doing you any favor deserving the trouble of such a journey, nor that I think my poor and humble self worthy of your coming to me, but because I learned your benevolence and willingness to oblige me when I was recently with you, as I have also at other times. Dearest father, as you are in age and in care for me, master in merit and brother in religion, if private business will permit you, deign to come and help me with your gracious presence and prayers, that my sacrifice may be acceptable in God's sight....."(1)

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(1)Luther to John Braun, Vicar in Eisenach, P.Smith: Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters, p. 21. Luther says later in his Table Talk: "When I first began to celebrate mass in Popedom, and to make such crossings with marvellous twistings of the fingers, and could not rightly hit the way, I said: 'Mary, God's mother, how am I plagued with the mass, and especially with the crossings.' Ah, Lord God! we were in those times poor plagued people, and yet



But this confidence did not last. Instead of coming into closer fellowship, it seemed that he was the more widely separated from God and the burden of his sins became heavier. He had entered the monastery with the conventional conviction that the monastic life was the surer way to attain the gracious acceptance of God, than the life of the ordinary Christian in the world.(1) Both ways of life were based on the idea of striving, with the aid of grace available through the sacraments to merit acceptance with God. The monk tried to do more than that which was required of the ordinary Christian.(2) Luther therefore gave himself, soul and body, to the discipline and work of the monk. The intense longing of his whole heart and life is revealed in the passages in which he tells of what had been his efforts to attain

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it was nothing but mere idolatry. They terrified some in such sort with the words of consecration, especially good and godly men who meant seriously, that they trembled and quaked at the pronouncing of these words: Hoc est corpus meum, for they were to pronounce them, sine ulla hesitatione; he that stammered, or left out but one word, committed a great sin. Moreover, the words were to be spoken, without any abstraction of thought, in such a way, that only he must hear them that spake them, and none of the people standing by. Such an honest friar was I fifteen years together; the Lord of his mercy forgive me." Hazlitt: Table-Talk, p. 168.

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{1} Cf. MacKinnon, Vol. I, p. 91.  
{2} Ibid.

that life which would win the grace of God. In one of these reminiscent passages he says, "I was an earnest monk, lived strictly and chaste, prayed incessantly day and night."(1) "I kept vigil night by night, fasted, prayed, chastised and mortified my body, kept obedience and lived chastely."(2) For almost fifteen years I wore myself out in self-sacrifice, tormenting myself with fastings, vigils, prayers and other very burdensome tasks, with the idea of attaining to righteousness by my works." (3) He could himself testify: "It is true, I was a pious monk, and so strict in the performance of my duties that I can say: 'If ever a monk reached heaven through monkery, I would surely have entered there.' All my friends at the cloister will bear witness to this, for if it had lasted any longer, I should have tortured myself to death with watching, praying, reading and other work"(4) Among his brethren he had the reputation of being a virtuoso of the religious life.(5)

His deep seated longing for a higher fellowship

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- (1) "Werke", xxxiii. 561: Documente 43 (1531) Cf. MacKinnon, Vol. I, p. 93.
- (2) Ibid., xxxiii. 574; Documente, 42 (1531) Cf. MacKinnon, Vol. I., p. 93.
- (3) Documente, 38 (1532), Cf. MacKinnon, Vol. I, p. 93.
- (4) Erlangen Edition, xxxi, 273. Cf. Köstlin, Vol. I, p. 51.
- (5) "Werke" xl, Pt. I. I., 134 (1535). Quoted by MacKinnon, Vol. I, p. 93: "I was so deeply plunged in monkery, even delirium and insanity. If righteousness was to be got by the law, I should certainly have attained it. I was a wonder in the sight of my brethren".

is reflected in his desire to live like the saints and to have fellowship with some holy person. He writes, "As a monk I often longed with all my soul to be brought into touch with the life and conversation of some holy man. Meanwhile at all events I cherished the fancy of such a holy man who, living in the desert, abstained from food and drink and lived only on the roots of herbs and cold water. And the idea of these monstrous saints I drew not only from the books of the medieval sophists, but even from the fathers."(1)

But with all the faithfulness with which he gave himself to the life of the convent, he had not yet found himself. It seemed that the more strenuously he exerted himself to attain salvation in this way the farther he was from finding it.

It should be noted that during these years at the monastery he had applied himself with all diligence to the study of the scholastic theology, to the writings of the fathers--particularly to Augustine, and to philosophy. These later aided in his step into a new life. In 1508 and 1509 he had spent a year teaching in the University of Wittenberg. Then in 1511 he went back to a permanent position there.

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(1) "Werke", xl., Pt.II., 103(1535): Cf. MacKinnon, Vol.I, p. 94.

We come now to that event in Luther's life which is of primary importance in understanding the basic truth of the Reformation as illustrated in the great Reformer. It is associated with his experience at Erfurt. While in the monastery he had come into a wider acquaintance with the Scriptures which were eventually to lead him to find his freedom in God through Christ by faith. Luther himself tells that on his entrance into the monastery the monks gave him a Bible bound in red leather and that he acquired such familiarity with it that he knew the contents of every page and where to find any particular text.(1)

It was as a result of his faithful study of the Scriptures that he had that experience which was one of the first turning points in his quest for God.(2) Luther tells us that it took place in the room of the tower of the monastery at Wittenberg which served as his study, after long and intense meditation on the

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- (1) Tischreden, i.44. Cited by MacKinnon. In Hazlitt's volume of his Table-Talk the following is found (p.14-15): "When I was young, I read the Bible over and over again, and was so perfectly acquainted with it, that I could, in an instant, have pointed to any verse that might have been mentioned. I then read the commentators, but I soon threw them aside, for I found therein many things my conscience could not approve, as being contrary to the sacred text. 'Tis always better to see with one's own eyes than with those of other people."
- (2) See MacKinnon, Vol.I, p. 148 for a discussion of the date of this event.

first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. In his Table-Talk(1) he speaks of the experience in these words: "The meaning of these words (justitia Dei), the Holy Spirit imparted to me in this tower." In the preface to the 1545 edition of his works he says that after he had spent days and nights in intense meditation on the passage in the first chapter of Romans that by the mercy of God this sudden light came to him.(2) At this moment he began to emerge into a new relationship with God and to realize that he was a gracious instead of a retributive God, and that man's hope for salvation lay not in his own works but in faith which was itself a gift from God. It has been said that "the experience thus described was undoubtedly the great turning point of his religious life."(3) It was for Luther the step that started him in the direction by which he came into fellowship with God.

There are two or three other things associated with his life as a monk and teacher which are mentioned briefly at this point. One was his trip to Rome about the winter of 1510-1511.(4) There is much that might be

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- (1) Tischreden, iii.228. Cf. MacKinnon, Vol.I. p. 150.
- (2) See MacKinnon, p. 150 ff.
- (3) Ibid., p. 154.
- (4) There is a difference of opinion on the date of this journey, which, however, it is not important to discuss here. See P. Smith: Martin Luther, p. 16, on this point.

said concerning the impressions received on this trip, but this one quotation from his own words is sufficient: "Rome is a harlot. I would not take a thousand gulden not to have seen it , for I never would have believed the true state of affairs from what other people told me, had I not seen it myself. The Italians mocked us for being pious monks, for they hold us Christians fools. They say six or seven masses in the time it takes me to say one, for they take money for it and I do not. The only crime in Italy is poverty. They still punish homicide and theft a little, for they have to, but no other sin is too gross for them.....So great and bold is Roman impiety that neither God nor man, neither sin nor shame, is feared. All good men who have seen Rome bear witness to this; all bad ones come back worse than before."(1)

During this period in which Luther was finding that which gave satisfaction and peace to his soul and yet before the outbreak of the controversy with Rome he was writing his lectures on the Psalms and on the Epistle to the Romans. In these it is evidenced that what he was seeking was not a philosophic but a personal God with whom he could come into a personal relation.(2) In his

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(1) Given by P. Smith: Martin Luther, p.19. The date is not given.

(2) Cf. MacKinnon, Vol. I, p. 160.

study of Augustine it was not Augustine's metaphysics which attracted him but the religious element in his teaching.(1) He was not conscious of heresy, but in fact had occasion to attack the heretics and to distinguish between his teaching and theirs.(2) His personal experience developed faster than his theology. In fact it was his religious experience which led him to take his theological stand in opposition to the Church of Rome. He interpreted the Scripture in the light of his own experience.

In his study of Romans his theology begins to take shape. These studies came in the years 1515-1516 and mark a development in that life that is soon to become the Reformer. As one has said of his commentary on Romans: "As the revelation of a great religious personality, a pioneer religious thinker, it is a contribution to the religion of the time. Its originality consists in the distinctively personal sense in which, inspired by Paul, he apprehends God and the relation of the soul to Him.....It mirrors the experience of a soul in its quest for God and salvation and the attainment of what it seeks."(3)

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(1) Cf. MacKinnon, Vol. I, p. 160

(2) Ibid. p. 161.

(3) MacKinnon, Vol. I, p. 174. P. Smith in his work on Martin Luther says of the development of his religious experience from the time of his first coming into the

Thus in all this struggle it had been the reaching out of the soul of a man for the heart of religion. Having found it he could not help but testify of it, and to stand up for it, and if necessary risk his life even unto death for it. He could no longer refrain from a protest when he saw abuse and error in those things which were of such vital concern to the very nature of man. Yet it was not that he was going to set about to reform the Church; much less had he any idea of separating from it. But the development of the Reformer having been along the line of that which is fundamental to religion, it could pursue no other course. So it was when later he took his stand before the Diet of Worms: "Here I stand. I can not do otherwise. God

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light on Romans 1:17, that, "Of course Luther's development was not completed at once. Even after the master-key had been found, the long struggle continued, and other factors entered in to modify and enrich his character. He entered the monastery to save his soul, and the struggle for peace took twelve long years before the monk was ripe for the great deeds he was called on to perform. No one can get even an idea of what the struggle cost him save by reading after him the folios and quartos he perused, and trying to follow him in all that tangled labyrinth. And yet his development was perfectly normal and even. That his health suffered somewhat from asceticism is undoubtedly true, but there were no morbid symptoms in his conversion. Comparing it to that of other famous Christians, there were no visions such as Loyola saw, and no moral breakdown such as that of Augustine. In those years of hardship, meditation, study, and thought, he laid the foundations of that adamant character which stood unshaken amidst a tempest that rocked Europe to its base."



help me! Amen".

Passing over many things we now turn to that event which in a very real sense marks the birthday of the Reformation--the posting of the Ninety-five Theses.

4. The Testimony of the Ninety-five Theses to Luther's Religious Experience.

Cowan in his "Landmarks of Church History" opens his chapter on the "Inauguration of the Reformation by Luther" with these two interesting sentences: "On the bronze door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg is a long Latin inscription which no Protestant can contemplate without deep interest. It consists of the memorable theses regarding indulgence which were affixed by Luther to the old wooden door of the church on the 31st October 1517".(1)

The question for consideration at this point is: What do the Ninety-five Theses reveal concerning

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(1)p. 158. He goes on to say: "Tradition represents Frederick, Elector of Saxony, as having dreamed on the previous night that he saw a monk writing on that very church in characters large enough to be read by the Elector at Schweinitz six leagues off, and with a pen which appeared to reach as far as Rome and to loosen the papal crown. The story cannot be traced back beyond 1591, and is probably a legend; but it embodies pictorially the fact that the publication of Luther's ninety-five theses was the raising of a standard whose scroll was read by Christendom, and the inauguration of the great movement which shook the foundations of papal Rome."

the religious experience of their author? For the purpose of this thesis the question resolves itself into this: Do they confirm that which has already been defined as the basic truth of the Reformation?

The posting of these theses marked the termination of Luther's ecclesiastical reserve. John Tetzel, a Dominican monk had been traveling through Germany proclaiming a special sale of indulgences to all the people. The common people eagerly embraced this rare offer of salvation from punishment not making a distinction between the guilt and punishment of sin. The letter of indulgence which they received after paying their money they cherished as a passport to heaven.(1) But this was in direct opposition to that by which Luther has attained to fellowship with God. To him remission of sin had come as a free gift of grace apprehended by a living faith.(2) Wherefore, in order to bring the matter to public attention on the 31st of October, after thoughtful deliberation he nailed ninety-five propositions to the Castle Church door, thus inviting public discussion of them.

The reception with which the theses met is significant in relation to the basic truth of the Reformation. Luther had posted them just before All Saints

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- (1) Tetzel was accused of saying:  
"Sobald der Pfennig im Kasten Klingt,  
Die Seel' aus dem Fegfeuer springt."  
See Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 153 f.
- (2) See Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 154.

Day (November 1) because that was a celebration which drew a large company of people including many students and professors. But on that day no public discussion or debate took place. The professors and students of Wittenberg were of one mind on the subject. The defense of course came but in the meantime the theses were copied and "spread as on angels' wings throughout Germany and Europe in a few weeks."(1) The response which they found in the hearts of the people is the significant fact to be noted here. They are not an attack upon the Church or its doctrines but upon the abuses which prevailed. Luther had not yet realized the theological implications of his stand.

In the preface to his Theses when they were published in the collection of his Latin works in 1545 he wrote: "I allow them to stand, that by them it may appear how weak I was, and in what a fluctuating state of mind, when I began this business. I was then a monk and a mad papist, and so submerged in the dogmas of the Pope that I would have readily murdered any person who denied obedience to the Pope."(2) Their spirit is significant and it was this which found a response in the hearts of the people who were hungry for pure, scriptural,

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(1) Schaff, Vol. VI. p. 156.  
(2) Ibid., p. 157.

and spiritual religion. The Themes of Luther have been called "a tract for the times."(1)

In his first thesis Luther says: "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ in saying: 'Repent ye' (literally, Do penance, Penitentiam agite) intended that the whole life of the believers should be penitence." K stlin makes the significant comment on this thesis: "The key to the entire theory of Luther is found in that which he presents in his very first theses, i.e., his biblical conception of Repentance. When Christ gave a commandment to repent, it was His desire that the whole life of believers should be a repentance.(2)

The 62nd thesis reflects Luther's religious experience also; "The true treasure of the Church is the holy gospel of the glory and the grace of God!" He has already given the warning in thesis 33 that "we must especially beware of those who say that these pardons from the Pope are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to God." The last four theses evidence the conviction that had been the result of his own struggle:

"92. Away then with all those prophets, who say to the people of Christ, 'Peace, peace,' and there is no peace.

"93. Blessed be all those prophets, who say to the people of Christ, 'The cross, the cross,' and(when) there

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(1) Schaff, Vol. VI. p. 167.

(2) K stlin, Vol. I, p. 226.

is no cross.

"94. Christians should be exhorted to strive to follow Christ their head through pains, deaths, and hells;

"95. And thus to enter heaven through many tribulations, rather than in the security of peace."(1)

It is evident throughout the Theses that Luther had had a great experience of the inner truth of religion, that he saw the great danger to the people of being misled in this regard. McGiffert shows how this attack on indulgences was an unavoidable result of his spiritual struggle. He says in part: "Religion was the most sacred of all affairs to him. For its sake he had long ago broken with his father and abandoned a career of great worldly promise, and in his religious life he had passed through the most agonizing and exalted experiences possible to a human soul. To make it a matter of buying or selling, to offer divine grace for gold, and to attempt to purchase the forgiveness and favor of God--all this was to befoul the holiest of all relationships; and, like the prophets of old, his pious soul waxed hot within him."(2)

With this experience back of him he was able to withstand even the advice of his friends. One of them told him, "You tell the truth, good brother, but you will accomplish nothing; go to your cell, and say,

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(1)A complete translation of the Theses is given by Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 160 ff.

(2)McGiffert: Martin Luther, p. 86.

God have mercy upon me."(1) On November 11, 1517, Luther wrote to John Lang at Erfurt: "...Let me know what you really think of my theses, and show me whatever errors may be in them.....I do not wish that they should expect from me the same humility--that is hypocrisy--that they once thought I ought to show towards their advices and decrees,for I do not wish that what I produce should be by the operation and advice of man, but by that of God. For if the work is of God who will forbid it? If it is not of God who will bring it to pass?" (2) and he signs his name Brother Martinus Eleutherius, Martin the Emancipator. "It was in this spirit," says MacKinnon, "that he met alike the onslaughts of his opponents and the misgivings of his friends. He was learning the secret of all great leaders--how, if need be, to stand alone with God against the world."(3)

##### 5.Luther's Later Experience as Confirmatory of his Earlier Experience.

Because that which followed in the Reformer's life is confirmatory of his earlier experience, space will be taken for but a brief mention of the more important events.

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- (1)Albert Krantz of Hamburg, who died Dec. 7, 1517.  
See Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 168.
- (2)P.Smith: Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters, p. 65, Letter No. 43.
- (3)MacKinnon, Vol. I, p. 305.

In the discussion which followed the posting of the Theses, the dispute resolved itself into a question of authority and Luther was forced into a conflict with the papal authority. In it Luther was branded as a heretic. During 1518 and 1519 he withstood the attacks and efforts to make him retract of Prierias, of Cajetan, and of Miltitz. Then in June and July of 1519 he is seen before the audience at Leipzig in the debate with John Eck. It was in the course of this dispute that Luther for the first time denied the divine right and origin of the papacy, and the infallibility of a general council. "Henceforth he had nothing left but the divine Scriptures, his private judgment, and his faith in God who guides the course of history by his own Spirit, through all obstructions by human errors, to a glorious end."(1) In his three treatises, "The Liberty of a Christian Man",(2) "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation", and "On the Babylonish Captivity of the Church", he set forth his essential positions. When the Papal Bull was published excommunicating him, with a company of Wittenberg students, professors, and townspeople, on December 10, 1520 he went to an open space outside the city and in a solemn manner burned the Bull

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(1)Schaff, Vol. VI, p. 182.  
(2)See above, p. 94ff.

of Excommunication. Lindsay comments on this event:  
"It is scarcely possible for us in the twentieth century to imagine the thrill that went through Germany, and indeed through all Europe, when the news sped that a poor monk had burnt the Pope's Bull. Papal Bulls had been for the most part powerful monarchs. This time it was done by a monk, with nothing but his courageous faith to back him. It meant that the individual soul had discovered its true value."(1)

In 1521 he confirmed to the world his experience before the Diet of Worms. It was here that he took his memorable stand. When threatened and asked by Eck whether he would recant or not, Luther replied: "Since your Majesty and your Lordships ask for a plain answer, I will give you one without either horns or teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture or by right reason (for I trust neither in popes nor in councils, since they have often erred and contradicted themselves) --unless I am thus convinced, I am bound by the texts of the Bible, my conscience is captive to the Word of God, I neither can nor will recant anything, since it is neither right nor safe to act against conscience. God help me. Amen."(2)

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(1)Lindsay, Vol. I, p. 251.

(2)Given by P.Smith: Martin Luther, p. 118.



The heroic spirit of the Reformer, his conquering faith in these trying times, the reality of his fellowship with God is also expressed in his many hymns. The best known and probably the one most representative of the Reformer is "Ein feste Burg".

"A tower of strength our God is still,  
A good defense and weapon;  
He helps us free from all the ill  
That us hath overtaken.

By might of ours can naught be done:  
Our fate were soon decided.  
But for us fights the champion,  
By God himself provided.  
Who is this, ask ye?  
Jesus Christ! 'Tis he!  
Lord of Sabaoth,  
True God and Saviour both,  
Omnipotent in battle.

The word of God will never yield  
To any creature living;  
He stands with us upon the field,  
His grace and Spirit giving.  
Take they child and wife,  
Goods, name, fame, and life,  
Though all this be done,  
Yet have they nothing won:  
The kingdom still remaineth."(1)

This earlier experience in which there had been such a terrific struggle but which finally resulted in the attainment of fellowship with God and which was the foundation of his stand against the papal powers, found a natural expression in the Augsburg Confession.

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(1)A translation by Thomas Conrad Porter given by Schaff, Vol. VI. p. 743. Schaff, p. 502 dates this hymn in the year 1524.

This however shall be discussed in the chapter following.

Luther, as was pointed out at the opening of this chapter, was the central figure of the Reformation. In his religious experience is found that which was at the heart of the Reformation, i.e., the desire to attain and maintain fellowship with God. In the experiences of the other Reformers, that which was found to be central in Luther's experience is confirmed in a like manner. Before entering upon the confirmation of the basic truth of the Reformation as expressed in the creedal statement it is well to follow at this point with a brief consideration of the experience of Zwingli and Calvin.

C. The Basic Truth of the Reformation Illustrated  
in the Religious Experience of Ulrich Zwingli.

It is interesting how in many respects the life and religious experience of Ulrich Zwingli is similar to that of Martin Luther. He was born January 1, 1484, only a few weeks after Luther. He showed himself to be a good student in school. He had a liking for music. He was educated in the Catholic religion by his God-fearing parents. He studied philosophy and the classics in the university. He was ordained to the priesthood. It is said that <sup>he</sup> copied carefully with his own hand the epistles of Paul in the original, that he might

have them in a portable volume and commit them to memory."(1)

On the other hand Zwingli did not have an intense spiritual struggle as did the monk in the convent at Erfurt. His conversion was more of a gradual process. But having chosen the Scriptures for his guide, he soon saw the abuses of Rome and began to break away from the traditions of the Roman Church. In 1518 while in the pastorate at Einsiedeln he began to attack certain abuses and particularly the sale of indulgences.(2)

A great development took place when he began his duties in Zurich in 1519. While there he gained a reputation as an expository preacher. He made it his chief object to preach Christ from the fountain and "to insert the pure Christ into the hearts".(3) The Scriptures were the only rule of faith and practice. It is said that two prominent citizens, who were disgusted with the insipid legendary discourses of priests and monks, declared after hearing his first sermon, "This is a genuine preacher of the truth, a Moses who will deliver the people from bondage."(4) "The great gain wherein the days of the Reformation rejoiced, and which it

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(1) Fisher: The Reformation, p. 121. See Schaff, Vol. VII, p. 31.

(2) Schaff, Vol. VII, p. 31.

(3) Schaff, Vol. VII, p. 40.

(4) Ibid., p. 41.

is impossible highly enough to appreciate, was the uncurtailed enjoyment of the word of God freely preached."

(1) Fundamentally, Zwingli and Luther were one in spirit although the method of bringing the "eternal treasures of their hearts to the consciousness of themselves and others may in many respects diverge." This is especially set forth by Zwingli himself in answering a charge of being an adherent of Luther. His answer speaks for itself:

"In the year 1516, before a man in our neighborhood knew of Luther's name, I began to preach the gospel of Christ. Who called me a Lutheran then?.....I was ignorant of Luther's name for two years after I had made the Bible my sole treasury. But it is, as I have said before, only the cunning of the Papists that causes them to load myself and others with such names. If they say, 'You must be Lutheran, for you preach as Luther writes,' my answer is, 'I preach also as Paul writes.' Why not rather call me a Paulist? Nay, I preach the word of Christ; why not call me a Christian?.....In my opinion, Luther is an excellent soldier of God, and one who has searched the Scriptures as earnestly as any man who has lived on this earth for the last thousand years. There has never been his equal as long as the Papacy has endured, in the manly and unshaken spirit in which he attacked the Pope of Rome. But whose deed was that? God's or Luther's? If you ask Luther himself, he will certainly tell you, 'God's.' Why, then, do you ascribe the doctrine of other men to Luther, when he himself ascribes his doctrine to God, and himself brings forth nothing new but what is contained in the eternal, unchangeable word of God? Pious Christians, do not suffer the glorious name of Christ to be changed into the name of Luther; for Luther did not die for us, but teaches us to know Him from whom alone we have all salvation. If Luther preaches Christ, he does it exactly as I do; though, thanks be to God, there have been led to God through him an innumerable multitude more than through me and others to whom God gives their measure, whether it be greater or less. I will bear no name other than that of my captain, Jesus Christ, whose soldier I am.....No

man can esteem Luther more highly than I. Nevertheless I testify before God and all mankind that I never in all my days wrote a syllable to him, nor he to me, nor have I caused any other to write for me. I have avoided doing so not because I was afraid, but because I desired to show to all men the uniformity of the Spirit of God, as manifested in the fact that we who are so far apart are in unison one with the other, yet without collusion and without my deriving what I preach from him, for every man does according as he has received from God."(1)

That Zwingli had had a deep religious experience, that he had found fellowship with God, and desired that all might share the same experience, is evidenced by the sermons which he preached. Hagenbach has summarized the leading thoughts of one of his sermons on "The clearness and certainty of the Word of God". It illustrates not only the experience of the Reformer but it illustrates and confirms the basic truth of the Reformation as herein set forth. The summary in part is as follows: "Man was created after the image of God, and for this reason bears within him a yearning after God. Man's looking up to God is a proof that there exists in us some little friendship(kinship), likeness, and resemblance to Him. Plants do not look up to man; they are not of his race. But the lower animals look

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(1)Hagenbach: History of the Reformation in Germany and Switzerland, Vol. I, p. 314.

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(1)A translation from Zwingli's works(Deutsche Schriften, Vol. I.1, pp. 253 ff.) by Hagenbach, Vol. I, p. 244 ff.

up to man, with whom they have a certain kinship. Man does fully look up to God, of whose race we are, as Paul teaches us. Besides this yearning of the human soul after God, it has a longing for eternal blessedness....."(1)

Zwingli like Luther had come into the presence of God and it was this which made him a Reformer in Switzerland. He himself testifies in the sermon just referred to, "I know assuredly that God teaches me; for I have had consciousness of His presence."(2) This was his confidence throughout life. He was faithful unto death as the account of his heroic death tells us. His last words as he lay on the field of battle at Cappel were: "What matters this misfortune? They may kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul."(3)

D. The Basic Truth of the Reformation Illustrated in the Religious Experience of John Calvin.

As has been said by Walker at the beginning of his biography of John Calvin, "Calvin belongs to the second generation of the reformers. His place chrono-

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(1) Hagenbach, Vol. I, p. 315.

(2) The beauty of his life and closeness of his fellowship with God are revealed in his Plague Hymns. This translation by Messenger is given (see Hagenbach, Vol. I, p. 274.): (In 1519 Zwingli had been very seriously ill with the plague that swept over Switzerland in year. During the reign of the plague he lifted up his soul unto God. This is the burden of these hymns.)

logically, and, to a large extent, theologically, is among the heirs rather than with the initiators of the Reformation."(1) He has been called "the Aquinas of the

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1. At the Beginning of the Malady.

"Lo! at my door Gaunt Death I spy! Hear, Lord of life, Thy creature's cry!	"Yet, if to quench My sun at noon Be Thy behest, Thy will be done!
"The arm that hung Upon the tree, Jesus, uplift-- And rescue me.	"In faith and hope Earth I resign, Secure of heaven,-- For I am Thine!

2. In the Midst of the Malady.

"Fierce grow my pains: Help, Lord, in haste! For flesh and heart Are failing fast.	"In satan's grasp On hell's dark brink My spirit reels,-- Ah, must I sink?
"Clouds wrap my sight, My tongue is dumb; Lord, tarry not, The hour is come!	"No, Jesus, no! Him I defy While here beneath Thy cross I lie.

3. On Recovery.

"My Father God, Behold me whole! Again on earth A living soul!	"Though now delayed, My hour must come, Involved perchance, In deeper gloom.
"Let sin no more My heart annoy, But fill it, Lord, With holy joy.	"It matters not; Rejoicing yet I'll bear my yoke To heaven's bright gate."

(3) D'Aubigne: History of the Reformation, Vol. IV, p. 486.

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((1) Walker: John Calvin, p. 1.

Reformation".(1) His contribution was that of erecting a new system and of bringing consolidation among the Reformed Churches. It has been said of Calvin in comparison with Luther and Zwingli that, "He was inferior to them as a man of action, but superior as a thinker and organizer. They cut the stones in the quarries, he polished them in the workshop. They produced the new ideas, he constructed them into a system."(2) Although each of the three Reformers had a particular bent, yet they were all dealing with one and the same thing. How then does the religious experience of Calvin illustrate the basic truth of the Reformation? Was the attaining of fellowship between God and man basic in his life?

It is said that as a boy he early distinguished himself not only by the excellent powers of apprehension but also by his strict morality and his zeal for the observance of the same by others. He frequently dared to censor his playmates and for that reason they are said to have nicknamed him the "Accusative".(3)

One of the first suggestions of his attitude in his earlier days is given by an incident which took place while he was yet a student in Paris. When a friend

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(1) Cowan: Landmarks of Church History, p. 166.

(2) Schaff, Vol. VII, p. 258.

(3) Cf. Hagenbach, Vol. II, p. 303; also Schaff, Vol. VII, p. 302.



by the name of Daniel asked Calvin to introduce his sister to the superior of a nunnery in that city, Calvin did so, and was successful in placing her, making no effort to change the purpose of the young woman. However "he admonished her not to confide in her own strength, but to put her whole trust in God."(1)

Calvin in the Preface to his Commentary on the Psalms says that, "God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame.....Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true Godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less ardour."(2) Calvin goes on to speak of how he had always preferred to live in seclusion without being known, but that "God so led me about through different turnings and changes, that he never permitted me to rest in any place, until, in spite of my natural disposition, he brought me forth to public notice."(3) He tells how William Farel detained him at Geneva, "not so much by counsel and exhortation, as by a dreadful imprecation, which I felt to be as if God had from heaven

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(1) Schaff, Vol. VII, p. 307.

(2) John Calvin: Commentary of the Psalms, Vol. I, Preface p. xl. From the Calvin Translation Society Edition, 1845.

(3) Ibid., xli.

laid his mighty hand upon me."(1) Absolute obedience of his intellect to the word of God, and obedience of his will to the will of God seem to be the basis of his fellowship with his Lord.

Some feel that Calvin's religion was of a stern, even, cold and intellectual nature. It is undoubtedly true that he demonstrated in his own life a most severe discipline of himself, yet that life with its religion was not without those warmer and more intimate elements of fellowship. Both of these no doubt were to a large extent a result of his recognition in the Scriptures, and in the Scriptures alone, the very voice of God. In his reply to Cardinal Sadolet's Letter in answer to the charge of heresy he wrote: "The heresy was, that I dared to protest against dogmas which they received. But what could I have done? I heard from thy mouth (the mouth of the Lord) that there was no other light of truth which could direct our souls into the way of life, then that which was kindled by thy Word."(2)

The warmer and more joyful side of his religious life is frequently exhibited in his writings. In his Preface to the Psalms he says: "In one word, not only will we here find general commendations of the goodness

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(1) John Calvin: Commentary of the Psalms, Vol. I, p.xlii.

(2) John Calvin: Reply to Cardinal Sadolet's Letter, Tracts, Vol. I, p. 56.

of God which may teach men to repose themselves in him alone, and to seek all their happiness solely in him; and which are intended to teach true believers with their whole hearts confidently to look to him for help in all their necessities; but we will also find that the free remission of sins, which alone reconciles God towards us, and procures for us settled peace with him, is so set forth and magnified, as that here there is nothing wanting which relates to the knowledge of eternal salvation."(1)

Theologically the center of his faith is expressed in these words from his Institutes of the Christian Religion. He says: "...No man can take a survey of himself but he must immediately turn to the contemplation of God, in whom he 'lives and moves'(Acts 17:28); since it is evident that the talents which we possess are not from ourselves, and that our very existence is nothing but a subsistence in God alone. These bounties, distilling to us by drops from heaven, form, as it were, so many streams conducting us to the fountain-head. Our poverty conduces to a clearer display of the fulness of God. Especially the miserable ruin, into which we have been plunged by the deflection of the first man, compels us to raise our eyes toward heaven not only as hungry

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(1) Calvin: Preface to Psalms, Vol. I, p. xxxix.

and famished, to seek thence a supply for our wants, but, aroused with fear, to learn humility."(1) Thus for Calvin to know God is the supreme object of human attainment.(2) But this was the heart of Luther's and Zwingli's experience also.

In his last days in his farewell to the Little Council which was gathered about him in his sick room, he asked forgiveness for his mistakes and shortcomings, "But", he says, "if I may say so, I have meant well, my faults have always displeased me, and the root of the fear of God has been in my heart."(3) God always came first in Calvin's life and to be obedient and near unto him was enough.

The last letter he was ever to send to any correspondent, he wrote to his well tried friend Farel. In it is this sentence: "It is enough that I live and die unto Christ, who is gain to those who are His in life and in death."(4)

#### E. Conclusion.

The purpose of the present chapter as stated at the outset has been to observe the religious exper-

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- (1) Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book I, Chapter I, Section 1.
- (2) Cf. Walker: John Calvin, p. 410.
- (3) Quoted by Walker, p. 437.
- (4) Ibid., p. 438.

iences of the three principal Reformers to see whether or not the basic truth of their experience was the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God. More consideration has been given to Martin Luther than to either Zwingli or Calvin because he was representative of the others as well as being the primary moving force in the earlier years of the Reformation. In his own experience, in his decision to enter the convent, in the ensuing struggle with its victory of attainment of fellowship with God in Christ through faith, and in the opposition and labors of his later years he stood firmly upon his convictions which were born out of closeness of fellowship with his God. In God was the anchor, the "mighty fortress" of his life.

What was true of Luther has also been found to be true of Zwingli and Calvin. Zwingli was conscious of the presence of God and even in death he could say, "They may kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul." Calvin's life of faithful obedience may also be understood in the same manner. For him to know God was the supreme object of human existence.

All three men were deeply religious. They had their differences but they were theological. The Reformers were in agreement with respect to the fundamental element of religion. They all found in the Scriptures the supreme rule of faith and practice; they were united

on justification by free grace through faith; and they agreed on the general priesthood of the believer. It has been shown in the preceding chapter, how these Reformation principles express the essence of religion. The basic truth of the Reformation, therefore, is not only illustrated but is confirmed by the religious experience of the Reformers.

We propose now to enter one other field of the Reformation sources for the establishment of this thesis: namely, the more formal creedal expressions which were set forth. It will be recalled that the discussion of Luther was concluded with a reference to the Augsburg Confession. This along with other statements will be the field of the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE BASIC TRUTH OF THE REFORMATION  
EXPRESSED IN THE CREEDAL STATEMENTS

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THE BASIC TRUTH OF THE REFORMATION  
EXPRESSED IN THE CREEDAL STATEMENTS

A. Introduction.

1. The Purpose of the Chapter.

If the basic truth of the Reformation is confirmed by the lives of the Reformers, it ought also to be found in those more formal statements that were a product of the period--statements, some of which were written by or under the direction of the Reformers. It would be only natural that that which had been the heart and soul of their religious experience should also be an essential factor in their confession of faith. It is the purpose of this chapter, therefore, to consider some of the representative creedal statements of the Reformation period to see whether or not the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God is essential in their spirit and content.

2. The Plan and Scope of the Chapter.

In addition to the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, the Evangelical Lutheran Church alone in whole or in part acknowledges six other symbolical statements which are original with them: 1. The Augsburg Confession, drawn up by Melanch-



thon (1530); 2.The Apology of the Confession, by the same (1530); 3.The Articles of Smalcald, by Luther (1537); 4.Luther's Larger Catechism (1529); 5.Luther's Smaller Catechism (1529); 6.The Form of Concord, prepared by six Lutheran Divines (1577). (1)

In the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Switzerland, France and the Netherlands, Germany, England and Scotland, a number of similar confessional statements evolved.(2) To consider all of these is at once beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, there are those statements which, because of their relation to the origins of the Reformation and to its primary moving forces, are representative, and may be expected to contain in them that which was its basic truth as a religious movement.

This chapter, therefore, proposes to limit its consideration of the Reformation symbols to four: first, the Augsburg Confession, because it is the one most highly esteemed and most generally recognized by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and because the deeper cause of its being written lay in "the inner necessity and impulse to confess and formularize the evangelical faith" in addition to that which had already been done.

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(1)Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol.I, p.21.

(2)Ibid., Vol.I, See Table of Contents, pp.xi, ff.

Although prepared by Melancthon, its doctrinal matter is Luther's. When it was sent to Luther from Augsburg for revision, Luther wrote to the Elector, May 15, 1530: "I have read the Apology (Confession) of Master Philip; it pleases me very well, and I know of nothing by which I could better it or change it, nor would it be becoming, for I cannot move so softly and gently. May Christ our Lord help, that it may bring forth much and great fruit, as we hope and pray. Amen."(1)

Secondly, we shall consider the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), because it is representative of the Reformed Church in Germany which occupied something of a mediating position between Calvinism and Lutheranism. It is also selected because of its wide circulation and translation into many languages. Schaff makes the statement that, "Whole libraries of paraphrases, commentaries, sermons, attacks, and defenses were written about it."(2) Moreover, in its use it has served a double purpose: as a guide for religious instruction of the youth and as a confession of faith for the Church. The Heidelberg Catechism has been called "the flower and fruit of the whole German and French Reformation".(3)

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- (1) Erlangen Edition of Luther's Works, Vol. 54, p. 145.  
Cf. Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I, p. 229.
- (2) Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I, p. 536.
- (3) Richards: Studies on the Heidelberg Catechism, p. 3.

The third confessional statement to be considered herein, the Canons of the Synod of Dort (1618), has been chosen because it grew out of a Synod which had a wide representation from the Reformed Churches and because it represented the triumph of orthodox Calvinism over Arminianism. The Synod of Dort has also stood high because of the imposing character of the assembly with all of its learning and piety. A century later, the celebrated Dutch divine, Campegius Vitringa, said of it: "So much learning was never before assembled in one place, not even at Trent."(1)

The Westminster Confession will be the fourth and last symbol for consideration. Like the Canons of the Synod of Dort it comes somewhat later (1647). It is one of its primary characteristics that it sets forth the Calvinistic system in its scholastic maturity. Although in England, its "native land", it was ultimately displaced, yet as "the product of English Puritanism it became the highest standard of doctrine for Scotch and American Presbyterians and supplanted the older confessions of their own Reformers."(2) By including the Westminster Confession we will have a body of testimony to the basic truth of the Reformation that extends from

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{1}Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol.I, p. 515.  
{2}Ibid., Vol.I, p. 759.

its emergence in the religious experience of the early Reformers to its outworkings in a new and established Church over a hundred years later.

This is the plan of this chapter and these four creedal statements mark its bounds. How do these confessional symbols give expression to the longing heart of man that seeks fellowship with God? This is the question which this chapter seeks to answer. It might also be added, that with doctrinal differences this study is not concerned. Its concern is the heart of religion.

B. The Basic Truth of the Reformation  
and the Augsburg Confession.

The Augsburg Confession was occasioned by the German Emperor Charles V., who commanded the Lutheran princes to present a statement of their faith to the Diet to be held in the Bavarian city of Augsburg. It was his desire that by this the schism might be healed and the controversy ended in order that both Catholics and Protestants might unite in a defensive war against their common enemy, the Turks. Therefore it was that on June 25, 1530, it was presented before the Diet consisting of representatives of Church and State assembled at Augsburg.

The Confession was justly called an Apology

as it was meant by its authors to be a dispassionate statement in vindication of the faith of the Lutherans before the Roman Catholics. It had been written by Philip Melancthon but as suggested above, its contents were primarily Luther's. Had it been written by Luther it would probably have been more aggressive and polemic. Yet it is probably true that for this very reason Melancthon was the one best fitted to produce such a work. By reason of its intrinsic and historic merits it has become the chief doctrinal standard of the Lutheran Church.(1) "It furnished the keynote to similar public testimonies of faith, and strengthened the cause of the Reformation elsewhere."(2)

Throughout it may be seen to reflect the experience of Luther, that man comes into fellowship with God, not by any system of works, not by any merits of his own, but by faith. This idea is specifically stated early in the first part of the Confession and in various connections frequently reappears. In Article IV, Of Justification, we read: "Also they teach that men can not be justified (obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness) before God by their own powers, merits, or works; but are justified freely (of grace) for Christ's

(1) Cf. Schaff: Vol. IV, The German Reformation, p. 707, f.

(2) Ibid., p. 708. He adds: "It had a marked influence on the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England." The proof of the statement may be found in his *Credo* of Christendom, Vol. I, p. 624 ff.

sake through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and their sins forgiven for Christ's sake, who by his death hath satisfied for our sins.

This faith doth God impute for righteousness before him."

(1) In Article VI, St. Ambrose is quoted: "This is ordained of God, that he that believeth in Christ shall be saved, without works, by faith alone, freely receiving remission of sins."(2) The Sacraments as explained in Article XIII, "were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather that they should be signs and testimonies of the will of God towards us, set forth unto us to stir up and confirm faith in such as use them."

(3)

In Article XX, Of Good Works, the experience of Luther in his struggle to attain fellowship seems to find its formal expression. It reads in part: "Whereas, therefore, the doctrine of faith, which should be the chief one in the Church, hath been so long unknown, as all men must needs grant, that there was the deepest silence about the righteousness of faith in their sermons, and that the doctrine of works was usual in the churches; for this cause our divines did thus admonish the churches: First, that our works can not reconcile

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(1) Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III, p. 10.

(2) Ibid., p. 11.

(3) Ibid., p. 15.

God, or deserve remission of sins, grace, and justification at his hands, but that these we obtain by faith only, when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake, who alone is appointed the Mediator and Propitiatory, by whom the Father is reconciled. He, therefore, that trusteth by his works to merit grace, doth despise the merit and grace of Christ, and seeketh by his own power, without Christ, to come unto the Father; whereas Christ hath said expressly of himself, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'"(1) It is also expressed in this passage: "Formerly men's consciences were vexed with the doctrine of works; they did not hear any comfort out of the Gospel. Whereupon conscience drove some into the desert, into monasteries, hoping there to merit grace by a monastical life. Others devised other works, whereby to merit grace, and to satisfy for sin. There was very great need, therefore, to teach and renew this doctrine of faith in Christ; to the end that fearful consciences might not want comfort, but might know that grace, and forgiveness of sins, and justification, are received by faith in Christ."(2)

That man's relation to God in this close and intimate way is of primary concern is further emphasized

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(1) Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III, p. 21.  
(2) Ibid., p. 23.

in the same article: ".....By Christ we have grace, righteousness, and remission of sins. Now he that knoweth that he hath the Father merciful to him through Christ, this man knoweth God truly; he knoweth that God hath a care of him; he loveth God, and calleth upon him; in a word, he is not without God, as the Gentiles are."

(1)

In Article VI of Part II, Of Monastic Vows, the basic truth of the Reformation is expressed in such words as these: "Christian perfection is this, to fear God sincerely, and again, to conceive great faith, and to trust assuredly that God is pacified towards us, for Christ's sake; to ask, and certainly to look for, help from God in all our affairs, according to our calling; and outwardly to do good works diligently, and to attend to our vocation. In these things doth true perfection and the true worship of God consist; it doth not consist in singleness of life, in beggary, or in vile apparel."(2)

In all of these is involved the great principle of the priesthood of all believers. In the emphasis on Christ, on faith, on grace, on the righteousness of God, on sin, and its opposition to anything

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(1) Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III, p. 24.

(2) Ibid., p. 57.



which might be a man made salvation, the Augsburg Confession is seen to have at its heart that which was the fundamental moving power of the Reformation, namely, the relation between man and God as one of fellowship. Luther and his associates had come into a grand and much sought for experience with God and being guided by the Scriptures and their own experience, this confession was the expression of what had taken place in their own lives, and those doctrines mentioned were the ones primarily involved. The spirit in which it was presented, and the faithful manner in which the Evangelical princes and Reformers stood by it are fuller evidence that the Confession was a testimony to a religious experience that had at its center that which is the heart of religion.(1) "These were living testimonies (the confessions) to that which, amid fiery conflicts, had in the consciences of the confessors approved itself to be truth.....They were the expression of the common faith of preacher and layman, of prince and people.....The subject of the dispute was not the bare fact of salvation in Christ, not the mysteries of the incarnation and redemption, but the personal appropriation and mediation of salvation. Not the goal itself, but the way to attain thereto, was the occasion of controversy."(2)

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(1) See Hagenbach, Vol. II, p. 124.

(2) Ibid., p. 134-136.

C. The Basic Truth of the Reformation  
and the Heidelberg Catechism.

In 1555 the Peace of Augsburg made no provision for other Protestants who did not accept the Augsburg Confession. There were a great many Protestants in South Germany and the Palatinate who held to the Calvinist type of faith. Lindsay ventures the statement that "It is probable that, had Luther lived for ten or fifteen years longer (he died in 1546), the great division between the Reformed or Calvinist and the Evangelical or Lutheran Churches would have been bridged over; but after his death his successors intent to maintain, as they expressed it, the deposit of truth which Luther had left, actually ostracised Melancthon for his endeavour to heal the breach."(1) The result was that large districts went over to the Reformed Church.

The Heidelberg Catechism was the product of the Reformed Church in Germany and a result of the controversy that had been going on between the Lutherans and the Calvinists over the real presence in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It was written at the suggestion of Elector Frederick III.(2) by two young professors of Heidelberg, both Germans, yet personally familiar with the Swiss Reformers, and confirmed in

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(1)Lindsay, Vol.II, p. 3.

(2)Frederick was the first German Prince who confessed

their doctrine and polity. One was Caspar Olevian who had tried to establish the Genevan type of Church government in the Palatinate; and the other was Zachary Ursinus, a pupil of Melancthon and a favorite with Calvin. As already suggested this catechism has found a wide acceptance. Blackburn says of it: "Its clearness, moderation, catholicity, conciliatory spirit, warmth, faithfulness to the system which it explains, home-going questions and heart-revealing answers, made it the one and only permanent creed of the German Reformed Church in all lands, if not the most popular of all Calvinistic symbols."(1) Because of its vital connection with the Reformation it may be expected that such a confession will have something of value to contribute to the understanding and confirmation of the basic truth of that movement.

That man's nature reaches out for fellowship with God is expressed in the very first question and its answer: Question 1. "What is the only comfort in life

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the Reformed Creed, as distinct from the Lutheran. He suffered reproach, was threatened and opposed. At the Diet of Augsburg in 1566 "he made before the Emperor a manly confession of his faith, and declared himself ready to lose his crown rather than violate his conscience. Even his opponents could not but admire his courage, and the Lutheran Elector Augustus of Saxony applauded him, saying, 'Fritz, thou art more pious than all of us'". Schaff: Creeds, Vol.I, p.532.

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(1) Blackburn: History of the Christian Church, p. 461.

and in death?" Answer: "That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live unto him."(1)

That God created man to live in fellowship with him is expressed in the answer to question 6: "God created man good, and after his own image--that is, in righteousness and true holiness; that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love him, and live with him in eternal blessedness, to praise and glorify him."  
(2)

The basic truth of the Reformation dealing with the attaining and maintaining of this fellowship is found in both the second and third parts, Of Redemption and Of Thankfulness. In question 21 and its answer, the cardinal doctrine of faith is expounded. Question:

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(1) Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol.III, p. 307.  
(2) Ibid., p. 309.

"What is faith?" Answer: "It is not only a certain knowledge whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his Word, but also a hearty trust which the Holy Ghost works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits."(1)

Question 60, "How art thou righteous before God?" is the same great question that was before Luther. Its answer is in accord with the spirit and doctrine of the Reformers: "Only by true faith in Jesus Christ; that is, although my conscience accuse me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them, and that I am still prone always to all evil, yet God, without any merit of mine, of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never committed nor had any sin, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me, if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart."(2)

That there is a close relationship between God and man is set forth in question 120, "Why has Christ commanded us to address God thus: Our Father?"

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(1)Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol.III, p. 313  
(2)Ibid., p. 326.

The answer is: "To awaken in us, at the very beginning of our prayer, that filial reverence and trust toward God which are to be the ground of our prayer; namely, that God has become our Father through Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of him in faith than our parents refuse us earthly things."(1)

With its emphasis on faith, on the redemptive work of Christ, on the righteousness of God and his love for men, and on the needy heart of man, the Heidelberg Catechism expresses and confirms that which has been set forth as the basic truth of the Reformation.

D. The Basic Truth of the Reformation and the Canons of the Synod of Dort.

During the early years of the seventeenth century the Reformed Church had been struggling in the Arminian controversy concerning the relation of divine sovereignty to human responsibility. It was led by a learned and able divine, James Arminius. Although the controversy was of a purely theological nature, because of the intimate connections between Church and State it became entangled in political issues and shook the whole country. Although Arminius had died in 1609 his position continued to be upheld by many able leaders. After

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(1) Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III, p. 351.

several conferences and attempts to bring about an agreement between these two parties of the Reformed Church, the National Synod of Dort was convened in November 1618 and lasted until the following May. The Arminians however completely lost out in the articles that were adopted by this assembly. Although not representative of both parties, there is no doubt but that the Canons of the Synod of Dort are the expression of an assembly noted for its learning and piety. They were an expression of profound convictions on deep matters of religion and as such have exerted a powerful influence on the Church. They are worthy, therefore, of consideration with regard to their expression of the basic truth of the Reformation.

(1) A few passages will serve to show their spirit and content.

Under the first head of doctrine, Of Divine Predestination, Article I gives man's status before God, quoting, among other verses, Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (2) In Articles IV and V and following, the way of escape from God's wrath unto life eternal is set forth. Article IV reads: "The wrath of God abideth upon those who believe not this gospel; but such as receive it, and embrace

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(1) See Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I, p. 509 ff. for the historical background of the Synod of Dort.  
(2) Ibid., Vol. III, p. 581.

Jesus the Saviour by a true and living faith, are by him delivered from the wrath of God and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them."

(1) And in Article V is found: "The cause or guilt of this unbelief, as well as of all other sins, is nowise in God, but in man himself: whereas faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation through him is the free gift of God, as it is written, 'By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God', etc.(2)

In Article VII it is evident that the writers of this creed were concerned with the same thing that the Reformers before them had had such a great experience in finding, namely, fellowship with God. In this article on election it explains how "This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit; to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of the riches of his glorious

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(1) Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol.III, p. 581.

(2) Ibid.



grace: as it is written, 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved' (Eph. 1:4-6).(1)

The closeness and import of this relation of the elect to God is emphasized in such a passage as Article XIII which says in part: "The sense and certainty of this election affords to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before him, for adoring the depth of his mercies, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him who first manifested so great love towards them."(2)

This section is brought to a conclusion with two quotations taken from two articles from the fifth head of doctrine which further express and confirm the basic truth of the Reformation as defined in this thesis. Indirectly they reflect the inner longings of men's hearts and express that which was of primary concern. Article I states: "Whom God calls, according to his

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(1) Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol.III, p. 582.  
(2) Ibid., p. 584.

purpose, to the communion of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, he delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world."(1) Article XIII in speaking of the perseverance of the saints, says: "Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard to piety in those who are recovered from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which he hath ordained, that they who walk therein may maintain an assurance of persevering; lest by abusing his fatherly kindness, God should turn away his gracious countenance from them (to behold which is to the godly dearer than life, the withdrawing whereof is more bitter than death), and they in consequence thereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience."(2) To behold the gracious countenance of God is another way of expressing the longing that was in the heart of Luther and others. To them the problem was how to become righteous before God, how to find peace and rest. How to enter into that fellowship was the great quest of

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(1)Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol.III, p. 592.  
(2)Ibid., p. 595.

Luther's early experience. That their precious find should not be lost and that others might share it, this made Reformers out of monks, teachers, and priests. Although the Canons of the Synod of Dort may be lacking in some of the warmth of spirit which is found in some of the other Reformation statements, yet it has at its center the evangelical note and gives expression to the central idea of the Reformation.

E. The Basic Truth of the Reformation and  
The Westminster Confession.

This confession arose out of the desire of certain leaders of England and Scotland to see the Church of England modeled more closely after the Reformed type. In 1642 the Long Parliament abolished Episcopacy and summoned an assembly of divines to meet at Westminster in June 1643 to advise Parliament as to the new form of church government. (1) The Westminster Confession along with the Directory and Catechism, was the product of this assembly. It did not arise out of a doctrinal controversy as did the Canons of the Synod of Dort. The chief point of difference was on church government and discipline. Yet a wholesome spirit prevailed. Even during the "Great Debate" which lasted thirty days the

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(1) Cf. Encyclopedia Britannica: Article on Presbyterianism.

two parties had great respect for each other.(1) One is amazed at the devotional fervor and endurance that was manifested in some of their meetings.(2) The assembly occupied about five years and about two years and three months were spent in the preparation of the Confession. It was presented in 1647.

This is something of the background out of which this document came. Although it is somewhat removed in point of time from the early years of the Reformers, yet that is all the more reason for including it here. It represents the post-Reformation period. It represents Protestantism as it continued to be after more than a century of trial and development. We are now ready to put to the Westminster Confession the question: How is this creedal statement related to

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(1) Cf. Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I, p. 738.

(2) Ibid., p. 752. Baillie, one of the commissioners, thus described one of their meetings on a certain fast day: "After Dr. Twisse had begun with a brief prayer, Mr. Marshall prayed large two hours, most divinely, confessing the sins of the members of the Assembly in a wonderfully pathetic and prudent way. After, Mr. Arrowsmith preached one hour; then a psalm; thereafter, Mr. Vines prayed near two hours, and Mr. Palmer preached one hour, and Mr. Seaman prayed near two hours; then a psalm. After, Mr. Henderson brought them to a short, sweet conference of the heart confessed in the Assembly, and other seen faults to be remedied, and the convenience to preach against sects, especially Anabaptists and Antinomians. Dr. Twisse closed with a short prayer and blessing. God was so evidently in all this exercise that we expect certainly a blessing both in our matter of the Assembly and whole kingdom." p. 752.

that which is fundamental in religion, that which has been defined as the basic truth of the Reformation, namely, the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God?

The keynote of the Reformation is sounded in Chapter XI, Of Justification. Article I reads: "Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God."(1)

That the Christian life is a life of fellowship with God is seen in Chapter XII, Of Adoption. It reads: "All those that are justified God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption; by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God; have his name put upon them;

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(1)Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol.III, p. 626.

receive the Spirit of adoption; have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a father; yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation."(1)

The experience of faith that had made such a change in Luther is expressed in such words as these in Chapter XIV, Of Saving Faith: "The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word; by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments and prayer, it is increased and strengthened."(2)

The Lutheran principle of the priesthood of the believer is expressed in Chapter XX which reads in part: "The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; .....as also in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love and willing mind.

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(1)Creeds of Christendom, Vol.III, p. 628.

(2)Ibid., p. 630.

All which were common also to believers under the law; but under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law to which the Jewish Church was subjected; and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of."(1) Manifestly in this is expressed that for which the Reformation stood, freedom of access by faith in Christ to God. In this the Westminster Confession was giving expression to that basic truth of the Reformation which centered about the question, How may one come into fellowship with God?

F.Conclusion.

Thus it is that the creedal statements that grew out of the Reformation testify to a great experience of fellowship with God. In their common emphasis on faith, on the grace of God, and the redemptive work of Christ, on freedom of access to God, they answer the question, How may man come into fellowship with the Divine Being? Coming as they did from assemblies of pious and learned men they may be taken as a fair ex-

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(1)Creeds of Christendom, Vol.III, p. 643.

pression of the religion embodied in the Reformation movement. Each of these confessions, as well as many others that have not been mentioned, represent the endeavor of men to put their religious convictions into systematic form. It is only natural that the statements which resulted would give expression to the experience of fellowship with God which had been theirs. Therefore it is that in them the basic truth of the Reformation finds an expression and is confirmed.



CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION:

THE RELATION OF THE REFORMATION  
TO  
THE CENTRAL IDEA OF RELIGION

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION:

#### THE RELATION OF THE REFORMATION TO THE CENTRAL IDEA OF RELIGION

The problem throughout this study has centered in this question, What is the relation of the Reformation to the central idea of religion? This thesis has aimed at finding out whether the Protestant Reformation was a movement which was primarily concerned with that which is the heart of religion.

For the accomplishment of this purpose two lines of study were laid down. The first sought to answer the question, What is the central idea of religion? The second sought to answer a similar question with regard to the Reformation, What is the basic truth of the Reformation?

Having completed the study of these two questions, in conclusion we are concerned with the answer to these questions as related to one another. If the basic truth of the Reformation has been found to have been one and the same with the central idea of religion, then we are prepared to draw certain conclusions as to its importance, its contribution, and its permanence. Let us proceed first by summing up the results of our research on these two questions.

A. The Central Idea of Religion.

It has been found that it is in accordance with the very nature of man that he should have fellowship with God. This is in one way or another reflected by the universality of religion, by the various forms which the religious struggles of men of other religions have assumed, and, most of all, is shown in the development of historic Christianity. Furthermore, any attempt to set forth the central idea of religion without reference to a Supreme Being is to omit that which is most essential. As Kenneth Edward has said: "Religion has consistently interpreted its experience as referring to a real Divine Being, with whom communion is possible and is actively sought." (1) It was Galloway who said: "We must ask the reader to take it as sufficiently verified, that in all religion we have a subject, an object, and a bond of relationship between them". (2) Indifference to this conception of Divine Being is of the very essence of irreligion, according to Ladd. (3) So it is, then, that man in his inward need and in all his various struggles that may be characterized as religious, is really reaching out for fellowship with God. Religion

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(1) See above, p. 43.  
(2) See above, p. 44.  
(3) See above, p. 43.

has been variously defined; but that the religious experience is "an experience of God and of our relationship with Him", seems to be a good description of the experience, representing the common and essential element of most definitions and expressing the central idea of religion. In other words, the central idea of religion has been found to be the reaching out of the heart of man for communion and companionship with a Higher Power, or as repeatedly expressed in this study, it is concerned with the attaining and maintaining of fellowship between man and God.

This statement is based on a study of the evidence of psychology, philosophy, and history. It is especially confirmed by Christianity because it stands superior to all other religions in its ability to satisfy man's religious needs in bringing him into fellowship with God. Herrmann in his work, "Communion with God", has this passage which is pertinent to our conclusion: "Now in this longing, or this affinity for that which edifies one religiously, in short, the impulse to order the inward and outward conditions of life so that the experience of the nearness of God may fill these more and more, lies the continuity of the religious life. But the sacred moments when we experience God's immediate presence are not the mere high-water mark to which the religious life attains. Without that experience of

God all the rest is so empty and vain that it does not deserve the name of religion. Such experiences constitute the incommunicable essence of all religion."(1)  
"To be near unto God", this is what man is seeking.

Since fellowship with God is of the essence of religion it is therefore fair to conclude that it is the indispensable element of religion. Any religion or religious movement that is to satisfy the religious need of man must have at its heart this very thing and must be concerned with the manner in which man may enter into that fellowship. Let us now sum up the results of our study of the Reformation.

#### B. The Basic Truth of the Reformation.

In the first place the Reformation was essentially a religious movement. Any attempt to explain it otherwise falls short of doing it justice. It started from the question, What must a man do to be saved? "How shall a sinner be justified before God, and attain peace of his troubled conscience?"

In the commonly accepted Reformation principles, the authority of the Holy Scriptures and justification by faith, and their associate principle, the priesthood of the believer, is to be found that which was the basic

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(1) Herrmann: Communion with God, p. 20.

truth of the Reformation. Each of them was concerned with how a man might come into fellowship with God. The Holy Scriptures figured largely in the lives of the Reformers for in them they found that it was by faith that they entered into fellowship with God. The Scriptures also brought them to realize that their access to God could be direct and that it was the privilege of every believer. This third principle opened the door that leads directly to the presence of the one with whom the human spirit longs to have fellowship. Christ thus became the only Mediator between God and man.

It has been found that nowhere else is the basic truth of the Reformation better expressed than in the religious experience of the Reformers, and particularly that of Martin Luther. Luther struck the keynote of the Reformation. It was "embodied" in him. It lived in him as in no one else. Especially in its earlier stages the history of the Reformation is identical with the experiences of Martin Luther. "He is the clear voice and oracle of the spirit of his age."<sup>(1)</sup>

What was the central factor in Luther's experience? Herrmann is speaking of Luther's experience well sums it up in these words: "Whether we turn to

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(1) R.M. Jones: *Spiritual Reformers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, p. 15.

his discourse in the year 1518 on Repentance, or to the sermons of the last years of his life, we find everywhere the same portrayal of the new life awakened in him by God, in the strength of which he could say of himself: 'My spirit is too glad and too great for me to be at heart an enemy to any man'. Luther's witness to that which makes a Christian to be a Christian is a treasure not yet sufficiently valued.....It will quicken and help forward, and perhaps bring deliverance to men in whom the yearning for God is not dead, to see how Luther came into that communion with God which gave him a joyful heart and dauntless courage."(1) Luther's experience testifies that it is not by works but by faith that one can attain that which is most precious, fellowship with God. This was the testimony of his Ninety-five Theses and the events of his later life. It was this experience which sustained him throughout the many crises and trying times of his life.

What was true of Luther was essentially true of Zwingli and Calvin. Zwingli knew God as his teacher and "had the consciousness of his presence." Calvin admonished men to repose themselves in God alone and "to seek all their happiness in him". "Our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone".(2) For

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(1)Herrmann: Communion with God, p. 56.

(2)Calvin: Institutes: Book I, Chapter I, Section 1.

Calvin, to know God was the supreme object of human attainment.

In the creedal statements which evolved out of the Reformation is to be found another expression and a further confirmation of its basic truth. Although each one came out of its own peculiar circumstances, yet they were one in spirit, and one in emphasizing the essential doctrine of faith and the freedom of access to God in Christ. Even though some of them were not written until years after Luther had entered into the new life of fellowship, yet those confessions represent the attempt of men to systematize their understanding of their experience. They represent their attempt to answer in writing that question which had been the concern of the Reformers; How shall a sinner be justified before God, and attain peace of his troubled conscience? Or, How may man attain to fellowship with God?

Thus it is that whether one considers the Reformation from the standpoint of its commonly accepted principles, or of the religious experience of the Reformers, or of the creedal statements which grew out of it, one finds that the essential or basic truth of that movement was concerned with how man may attain and maintain fellowship with God. The Reformers had found it, and in their confessional symbols they expressed it.



Their answer is essentially contained in the doctrine of justification by faith. This had thrown open to them the gates to a new life. Nothing could shake them in it. They prized it above all things. Men had grown weary of a religion that was failing to bring them into fellowship with God. When they came into the realization that to every man belonged the right of immediate access to God, and that through faith one was justified and received the forgiveness of sins, "it was a draught of living water to the thirsty, a breath of fresh air to those fainting in the desert, and was eagerly received."

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C. The Relation of the Reformation to the Central Idea of Religion.

It is now evident, as no doubt it has been throughout the latter part of this discussion, that the basic truth of the Reformation and the central idea of religion as herein set forth are one and the same. This is to say that the Reformation was essentially concerned with that which is the very heart of religion, the attaining and maintaining of fellowship with God. But what is the significance of this relation?

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(1) Vedder: The Reformation in Germany, p. 385.

D. The Significance of this Relation.

It is evident that here is an answer to those who say that "the Reformation was only a false dawn", that it was only of temporary value and that it must be superceded by a "new reformation". Because the Reformation of the sixteenth century had at its heart that which is the very essence, the indispensable factor in religion--which religion must have if it is to be able to really meet the needs of man--it is of permanent value. It is in line with that apostolic Christianity which needs to be experienced and practised rather than set aside. This is not only based on our conclusion from the study of the Reformation but is in harmony with the conclusions of experts in the fields of the psychology of religion, of the philosophy of religion, and the history of Christianity.

The Reformation is not, therefore, a side issue of minor importance in the course of the religious experience of mankind. It is on the other hand, "a deeper apprehension and application" of Christianity, of real religion "than had been known before". As long as the ultimate aim of Protestantism is concerned with bringing every man into living union with Christ, it is concerned with that which is of prime importance in religion. It is seeking to bring about that relationship

between God and men which has been a primary concern in the lives of men throughout the ages. As Herrmann says, "If no man can be religious without the consciousness that God communes with him personally, then religion can only be kindled in such an experience in a man's own life as makes upon him the impression that God is thereby communing with him".(1) This was the experience of the Reformers. It was the experience of those who followed after. "Without that experience of God all the rest is so empty and vain that it does not deserve the name of religion." It is an experience which no creed can adequately express; yet it is an experience that could move a continent and influence the world.

The Reformation was a result of an experience in which the longing hearts of men had sought for fellowship with God and had been rewarded. Because it was concerned with how men might attain and maintain fellowship with God it made an invaluable contribution to mankind and is of permanent value.

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(1)Herrmann: Communion with God, p. 79.

CHAPTER VIII

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## CHAPTER VIII

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