

Sommer, Graebner, and the Roman Catholic Church:
A Study of Rhetorical Criticism in the Lutheran Church

by Charles Raasch

Senior Church History

Professor Fredrich

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

Sommer, Graebner, and the Roman Catholic Church
A Study of Rhetorical Criticism in the Lutheran Church

"Meanwhile, we see and hear what a masterly conjurer the pope is. He is like a magician who conjures gulden into the mouths of silly people, but when they open their mouths, they have horse dirt in them. So this shameful fop Paul III calls for a council now for the fifth time, so that anyone who hears the words must think he is serious. But before we can turn around, he has conjured horse dirt into our mouths, for he wants to have a council over which he can exercise his power, and whose decisions he could trample on. The very devil himself would thank him for such a council, and no one but the miserable devil, together with his mother, his sister, and his whoring children, pope, cardinals, and the rest of his devilish scum in Rome will get there."(1)
-- Martin Luther

When Martin Luther wrote the treatise Against the Roman Papacy, an institution of the Devil in 1544, it was the most bitter of his polemic writings. In the political power struggle between Emperor Charles the V and Pople Paul III, Luther's treatise became a key instrument of Protestant propaganda against papal diplomacy.(2) There can be no denying that Luther's written words in this treatise were powerful and influential, or that he brought forth valid doctrinal points against the Roman Papacy. But the style of writing he used, a style of bitter rhetorical criticism which he focused on religious and personal faults, is often questioned. Did Luther have valid reasons for using such harsh crit-

icism against the Roman Catholic Church, or was he out of line in pursuing his own personal bias? Did this intense style of writing accomplish for Luther what he thought it would, or was he surprised by its results? Where exactly is the fine line between "proper" rhetorical criticism and "improper" rhetorical criticism?

To help define that fine line let us jump about four hundred years into the future after Luther, to the year 1914. This was the year when the Lutheran Witness, the official newspaper of the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod, took on two new co-editors, Martin Sommer and Theodore Graebner. They might be described as gifted theologians with strong confessional voices. They were prolific writers who carried the fledgling voice of conservative Lutheranism. Yet when it came to their articles concerning the Roman Catholic Church and its activities, they took on the identity of journalistic warriors who were determined to seek vengeance.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the anti-Catholic rhetorical criticism which Sommer and Graebner produced in the Lutheran Witness during their years as co-editors, 1914 - 1949, and the ways it influenced the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. We hope to do this by first of all examining the personal history of Sommer and Graebner and the events that shaped their lives and their writing style. Secondly, we want to examine their rhetorical attacks against the Roman Catholic Church as found in the Lutheran Witness. Thirdly, we want to look at the reasons behind their use of criticism. Finally, we want to look at the result of such rhetorical criticism on the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

It has been said that every writer, by the way he uses the

language, reveals something of his spirit, his habits, his capacities, his bias.(3) However the opposite may be true. By looking at the events which shaped the individual life of a writer, we might learn the reasons and motivation behind his writing style. Let us take a closer look at these two Lutheran scholars.

Martin Sommer (1869 - 1949) started his ministry when he was called by Grace Church, St. Louis, Mo., in the June of 1892. During the first five years of his ministry at Grace he was a major factor, along with others, in starting English-speaking churches. During the early years of his ministry, Pastor Sommer was somewhat of an attraction in St. Louis because he was one of the first American-language preachers in that city of his Synod. He was well-versed and dedicated in the conservative doctrines of the Missouri Synod and at home in its medium, the German language, yet he possessed the vision to see that the real potential of the Lutheran church lay in the English language. In June of 1914, Sommer was elected by the Missouri Synod as co-editor of the Lutheran Witness, its official English-language paper. In 1920 Pastor Sommer left Grace Church after twenty-nine years of service to become professor of Homiletics and related subjects at Concordia Seminary. Sommer turned out to be a caring, enthusiastic professor, eager to help students bring the old truths of Luther into the new language of America.(4)

Besides his editing of the Lutheran Witness, Sommer's writing career also included numerous books, such as The Truth Which Makes Us Free, The Lutheran Album, and The Voice of History. His writing was rich in classic quotations and drew heav-

ily from his proficient knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Clarity was his literary watchword; above all he strove to make his writing comprehensible to the minds of his readers. He shunned turgid prose and flowery imagery.(5) His associate, Theodore Graebner, described him this way: "He had a retentive memory and a quick wit, he was a widely read man, all integrated with a deep classical training that made him a man of finest culture."(6)

Theodore Graebner (1876 - 1950) started his ministry in 1897 when he taught History at Walther College, St. Louis. In 1900 he taught English at the Lutheran Ladies' Seminary, in Red Wing, Minn. In 1906 he accepted a call to a mission field of the Norwedgian Synod in Irving Park, Chicago. In 1908 he accepted a call to Jehovah Lutheran Church, Chicago, serving as their pastor until 1913, when he accepted the editorial chair at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In 1914 he began his long career as co-editor of the Lutheran Witness, which he held until 1949. During these years he also taught various theological courses at the Seminary, most notably Philosophy and New Testament exegesis. In 1927 He, along with others, founded the Concordia Historical Institute, and served on its Board of Directors until the time of his death.(7)

Graebner was both a proficient editor and a prolific writer. During various times of his ministerial career he served as editor of Illustrated Home Journal, Lutheran Herald, Der Lutheraner, and department editor of Lehre and Wehre and the Homiletic Magazine. He is credited with writing more than eighty books, brochures, and pamphlets frequently related to church history. Then most notable among these works are The Dark Ages, The Story of the Catechism,

The Story of the Augsburg Confession, The Pope and Temporal Power,
and Church Bells in the Forest. He was considered by his col-
leagues to be an outstanding theologian and writer. (8)

Graebner and Sommer were obviously well-qualified for their roles as co-editors of the Lutheran Witness. M. J. Roshke, formerly of the Editorial Department of Concordia Publishing House, once said this of the two editors: "Dr. Graebner is a theologian who writes like an editor, and Dr. Sommer is an editor who writes like a pastor."(9) Together they spoke as a single voice through their writing in the Lutheran Witness, as Graebner attests to in an article he wrote in the Witness of July 11, 1939: "When we started in 1914, we agreed that neither would ever print anything the other could not subscribe to, whether in matter or diction. This rule has been observed without a trace of argumentativeness or of annoyance on either part."(10)

However, it was this single voice of Sommer and Graebner which used the official newspaper of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, the Lutheran Witness, as a platform for some of the harshest rhetorical criticism against the Roman Catholic Church since Luther. Let us take a look at a number of examples.

In the area of the Papacy, Sommer and Graebner often used bitter criticism against the religious views of the Papacy, which was justifiable, and against the many temporal or social activities of the Papacy, which was sometimes questionable. Sommer, in an article entitled "The Pope to the Rescue"(Witness XLIII), commented harshly on the Pope's peace efforts:

"During the last war the Pope admitted that he could not stop the war, that he could not stop the propaganda of lies, that he could not in-

fluence the nations in favor of a just peace; in short, it was very evident again that as a peacemaker the Pope is a complete failure. He was not invited to the Peace Conference because the statesmen did not trust him. Again he proved a failure....He would so much like to have all men, with all their quarrels, come to his court. If men were only willing to pay him enough, he would decide every family quarrel."(11)

Sommer, in an article entitled "The Pope Ashamed of Italian Emigrants"(Witness XLVIII), attributed the problem of crime in Italy to the role of the Papacy:

"In Italy it requires more soldiers and police to protect the law-abiding against the criminal than in any other country that we have ever visited, and this, although the Pope has had his own way for centuries in that country. He was allowed to have entire control of Rome for hundreds of years, and he made such a mess of it that respectable Italians took the whole territory away from again and put it into the hands of Italian laymen, because they found that even the politicians ruling Rome made for a better and clearer city than what they had under the Pope."(12)

In the article, "Restore the Murderous Pope and Turk" (Witness LIII), Sommer made this comment about the Papacy:

"These have never felt the oppression of these two tyrants and murderers of Christians (Turks and Catholics)...Oh, indeed, we still have reason to sing, "Restrain the murderous Pope and Turk."(13)

In the area of government and political issues, Sommer and Graebner made serious assertions against the Roman Catholic Church as enemies of basic American freedoms and against world peace. In an article entitled "Freedom of the Press"(Witness XL), Sommer stated that the Roman Catholic Church delighted in opposing fundamental liberties:

"But let us not on that account immediately proceed to pass laws that will suppress freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The Roman Cath-

olic Church at once would welcome such a law to silence, or at least to hamper, all protest and testimony."(14)

However, their criticism of the Roman Catholic Church in American and World affairs was far more intense. In an article concerning the Catholic Eucharistic Congress of 1926, Graebner called this the "most stupendous of Roman propaganda ever witnessed in the United States and that the ulterior purpose of this council was to bring the spiritual claims of the Pope to the attention of the American public and to make people gape and wonder at the size, power, and wealth of the Catholic Church."(15) Sommer accused the Roman Catholic Church of being a catalyst for religious and political unrest throughout the world in his article entitled "Will Religious Wars Return?"(Witness LVI):

"There can be no question about it that, if the Roman hierarchy had the power which it had before the Reformation, it would involve other nations in wars, aye, in the most cruel of wars, civil wars, such as we have in Spain.... We teach all our people to pray to God: "Restrain the murderous Pope." These words do not stand in need of correction; they are as much needed today as before."(16)

In an article concerning the Masonic Order and the Roman Catholic Church(Witness XLIII), Graebner attributed to the Catholic Church the charge of political manipulation:

"We are not guessing when we say that both the Masonic Order and the Roman Catholic hierarchy are part of that Invisible Government which rules national and international politics, and for which the constitutional governments are but screens."(17)

In the area of Catholic relations with different church bodies and religious groups, Graebner and Sommer were only too quick to find an ulterior motive for their actions. In an article

concerning the Catholic Knights and the Shrine, Graeber gave this reason for their apparent fellowship (Witness XLII):

"In either case the lust of power is revealed as the prevailing nature, all parties showing a perfect willingness to give principles a back seat, if necessary for a coalition between Jews, Catholics, and Shriners for the control of political office."(18)

In an article entitled "Not Forgetting the Hammer Blows" (Witness LIX), Graebner took a negative view of Catholic-Jewish Relations. He stated: "The reference to Rome's "tremendous propaganda" causes us to ask what might be the meaning of the present evident tie-ups between the Roman Church and the international Jew."(19)

In the area of Catholic organizations and religious orders, Graebner and Sommer were extremely critical of their motives and religious training. After setting up various meetings focusing on religious prejudices, the Catholic Knights of Columbus received this kind of endorsement from Sommer (Witness XXXVI):

"Do these priests and Knights of Columbus realize that they could do a great deal in their own churches -no need of renting a public hall - to ally religious prejudice? But they prefer to use their own churches to sow religious prejudice against Luther, Lutherans, and all Protestants, while they would like to lure some foolish Protestants to public halls to tell them that Rome is a mere harmless kitten, and is humbly satisfied with bare tolerance. Are you surprized that the dictionary gives as one of the definitions for Jesuit, "A crafty, insidious, double-dealing person"?"(20)

In an article entitled "Another Jesuit Quitting" (Witness XLVIII), Sommer gave this evaluation of the Jesuit Order:

"In spite of all that is done to keep a Jesuit in his order and in his Church, it happens again and again that one of them leaves both. The religious liberty which we now enjoy makes it possible for these precious souls to take this step without encountering incarceration or persecution to the utmost. Some annoyance

and persecution they experience as it is."(21)

Concerning the Jesuit system of education Sommer stated:

"This teaching term is detested by most of the Jesuits, who are counting the days when they will be released from it and speak of this period of their lives as damnatio ad bestias, that is, the condemnation to the beasts, by which pet name we presume they mean their scholars. He reveals to us also that the boys often bitterly complain of the wretchedness of their teachers."(22)

Sommer was also quick to point out to the public eye any problems that had befallen the Catholic Priesthood, as he demonstrated in an article entitled "Ex-Priests" (Witness LIII):

"Again and again not only lay members leave the Roman Catholic Church, but also priests turn from that superstition. One of those who has lately left the Roman Church, former Father L. H. Lehmann, tells of the baneful effects which the teachings of Rome have upon laymen and clergy. For four years he attended a school for priests in Rome. Of his experiences at this school he writes that during those four years in the college of propaganda six of his companions, all Irish or Australian boys, became totally affected in mind and became inmates of lunatic asylums."(23)

However, the most damaging and bitter rhetorical criticism of Sommer and Graebner against the Roman Catholic Church came when these two co-editors associated the Catholic Church with the Klu-Klux-Klan. In fact, in an article entitled "Catholics and the K.K.K." (Witness XLII), Sommer went so far as to assert that the Catholics were the cause for the Klu-Klux-Klan:

"But while all this is true, the Catholics nevertheless have a bad case against the Ku Klux Klan. In the first place, that very spirit which moves, actuates, and fills the Ku Klux Klan is the persecuting spirit of Rome. Romanists have hunted down unoffending members of other churches, captured them, tortured them, and burned them at the stake. In Europe last summer I saw some of the gruesome instruments of torture which these Rom-

anists invented in order to torture Protestants. Now, while it is true that through the Lutheran Reformation Rome has lost much of its power to torment and harass evangelical Christians, still they not only continue to teach that they have the right, but that it is a duty of Catholics, to do this whenever they have the power....Thus Rome is to this day the teacher of religious intolerance and the exemplar in satanic persecution. In the Ku Klux Klan Rome is reaping what it has sown....These unscrupulous political machinations of Rome have been one cause which has driven these Ku Klux Klan men into their desperate courses. This is not an effort to excuse the Ku Klux Klan. They fully deserve condemnation and punishment. But those whining and protesting Romanists have the greater sin, for they have driven these men to their excesses. Rome's complaint against the Ku Klux Klan should be met by telling that mother of persecution that she is but eating the fruit of her own ways and is being filled with her own devices."(24)

Graebner and Sommer were also willing to take that comparison one step further by stating that the Roman Catholic Church was a more wretched institution than the Ku-Klux-Klan. Graebner made this comment in an article about the Klan and Romanism (Witness XLIII):

"We have not found in the Klan literature any charges made against the Roman Church which are untrue....Official Roman teaching makes heresy not only a sin, but a crime which should be eradicated by hanging and fire, if necessary. There is no more intolerant and tyrannical organization on earth than the Roman Church."(25)

Sommer added this comment in his article entitled "The Catholic Church and the Bible", "Romanists complain of the persecution of the Ku Klux Klan, but give them half the chance, and they themselves will out-Klux the Klan."(26)

The rhetorical criticism of Sommer and Graebner against the Roman Catholic Church was not an illusion. It was real and dir-

ect, and covered different facets of the Catholic Church. But the question which needs to be answered is whether or not this criticism was valid criticism. Were there justifiable reasons behind their harsh words of criticism, or did they abuse their responsibilities as co-editors?

In one observation, their use of rhetorical criticism might be justified if you examine the context of history into which it was used. In the early 1900's, sharp rhetorical criticism was the rule rather than the exception. It was not only used by Protestant denominations, but also extensively by the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, Catholic writers such as Hilare Belloc were quick to attack the foundations of Lutheranism, such as the founder of the Lutheran Church, Martin Luther. In one of his articles he stated:

"The name most prominently associated with the crises is that of Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, German by birth and speech, and one of those exuberant, vital, rather inconsequential characters which so easily attracts hearty friendships and which can never pretend to organization, though certainly to creative power. What he precisely meant or would, no man could tell, least of all himself. He was "cut" for the general wave of change. Whether he ever intended even to the end of his life, nay, whether he could ever have imagined, a disruption of the European Unity is very doubtful. A large, coarse, happy man, comparable in some ways to Danton, but without Danton's sanity or measure and certainly without his grasp of things."(27)

In another of his articles, Belloc ridiculed the Reformation:

"What we call "the Reformation" was essentially the reaction of the barbaric and ill-tutored fringe, external to the old and deep-rooted Roman civilization, against the influences of that civilization....The Reformation is simply the turning-back of that tide of Roman culture which, for five hundred years, had set steadily forward and had progressively dominated the insufficient

by the sufficient, the slower by the quicker, the
obfuscated by the clearer-headed. It was a matter of intel-
lectual superiority which offended them."(28)

In the area of government, other Catholic writers, such as
Dudley Wooten, claimed that Protestant propaganda had created gov-
ernmental bias against the Catholic Church. He stated:

"The legal and constitutional safeguards of re-
ligious liberty and freedom of conscience, so
proudly acclaimed by all Americans, are perpetual
memorials of the fact that proscription and per-
secution were the earliest and exclusive fruits
of Protestant bigotry in the United States; and
it should be remembered that several of the states
retained and enforced the most rigid penal sta-
tutes against Catholics for years after the form-
ation of the Union.

It must be conceded, however, that histor-
ically and by the rule of majorities, this has
been and is today a Protestant country. Its pre-
valent religious sentiment is of that sect; the
ruling classes everywhere and in all those depart-
ments of activity and influence that give color and
tone to the life and opinions of the people have
been under the control of that element; great care
has been taken by those who shape the culture and
prescribe the studies in the public educational
institutions to inculcate the Protestant view of
history and humanity and to teach no substantial
fact favorable to any other Christian body of be-
lievers....If there be any blemishes in the national
character or any mistakes upon the national agenda,
acy in the ideals and institutions of the Republic,
the sole responsibility rests upon the Protestant
majority that has dominated the religious field,
dictated the social conventions and monopolized
the political functions of the American common-
wealth since its history began."(29)

In the same article, Wooten was also ready to denounce the Prot-
estant view of Christianity. He stated:

"Christianity, as represented by the oldest
of its Protestant advocates, is today in this
country little more than sentiment, a system of
social service, of ethical philosophy, of phil-
anthropic enterprise; and in more than one instance
its "divine philosophy" has indeed become "pro-
cress to the lords of hell"."(30)

Clearly their were journalistic warriors on both sides of the religious spectrum. In one sense, Sommer and Graebner were only fighting fire with fire, defending themselves with the same degree of rhetorical criticism that was being used against them by Catholic writers.

The rhetorical criticism of Sommer and Graebner might also be justified when one examines their purpose for using it. Their primary reason for using such criticism was the condemnation of the false religious beliefs of the Catholic Church and the staunch defense of their Lutheran confessions. To Sommer and Graebner, the Roman Catholic Church was a very real and potent enemy to the Lutheran Church. In an article entitled "Why write against Romanism?" (Witness LVI), Sommer stated:

"We have very good reasons for opposing the claims of the Bishop of Rome. In the first place, God has commanded us to preach all things whatsoever Jesus has taught us are in opposition to what the Pope teaches....Of all the divisions of Christendom Romanism is the strongest. If its error, trickery, and ruinous teaching were not opposed, but allowed to deceive the people without refutation or remonstrance, the truth would soon be veiled again and shams played up as genuine truth."(31)

Sommer and Graebner considered themselves the watchmen of the sheep of confessional Lutheranism whose purpose was to guard the flock against the wolves of Catholic heresy. They considered their style of rhetorical criticism against the Catholic Church not abusive or degrading, but rather something absolutely necessary if they were to remain strong in their defense against Catholic heresy. Sommer defended their use of rhetorical criticism in this way (Witness XLI):

"Criticism and condemnation are absolutely

necessary here upon this earth as long as there is sin and error. They are not the only things necessary, we know that very well, but they are needed, and those alone can exercise these duties properly who have and apply the correct standards of doctrine and action, namely, God's Word, and who can offer substitutes, improvements, yea, genuine benefits and blessings in place of those things which they condemn and criticize. When criticism is thus exercised, it will prove a real blessing to those who accept it....As long as sinners need to repent, so long as there is a place for the preaching of repentance, and as long as sins and errors and mistakes are in this world, there is a place for just criticism and correction. God's Word supplies the matter and the manner for this work."(32).

Finally, the use of rhetorical criticism by Graebner and Sommer might be justified on the grounds that it was not motivated out of personal hatred or bias, but out of sincere spiritual concern for their Catholic brother. Their fellow man was being deceived by the false practices and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and they needed to be warned. Sommer describes their spiritual concern in an article entitled "Lutherans Are Debtors to the Catholics" (Witness LXV):

"A true Lutheran does not hate the Catholics: he loves them; and because he loves them, he would gladly share his freedom, his truth, and his joy with them. That is the reason why Lutherans warn the Catholics against the errors of Rome....When we Lutherans warn against superstition, we are not moved by hatred or envy, but we are moved by love and pity....The truth is that there are many Catholics who are thankful for this testimony of Lutherans. Moreover, thousands of them, by this our testimony, have even now been delivered from bondage and have come into the glorious liberty of the children of God."(33)

For Sommer and Graebner, the Lutheran Witness became just that, a strong confessional voice that witnessed for the doctrinal truths of conservative Lutheranism and against the doctrinal errors of the Roman Catholic Church. Their frequent use of Scripture pas-

sages in the articles helped to defend their position and to justify their cause. Yet their were times when their attacks on the Catholic Church were not valid, when they went beyond the boundaries of confessionalism to the area of personal ridicule. In his article entitled "Mark Twain and Romanism" (Witness LIX), Sommer takes a rhetorical "cheap shot" at the Catholic Church:

"Our Government is now to issue "Mark Twain Commemorative Stamps," when, lo and behold, a Roman Catholic Congressman takes occasion to vilify this man and to heap opprobrium upon his early life. If Romanists object to laughter produced by their saint stories, they ought to begin by closing the mouths of the monks of Rome, who regale the visitors to the shrines with their foolish saint stories, producing laughter as boisterous as any provoked by radio comedians. Indeed, these monks do not only produce this laughter, but they join in it. We have been there and have heard it. The fact is that Christian Science and Romanism provide more material for jest, comedy, and humor than almost anything else in the world."(34)

It is obvious that Graebner and Sommer sometimes missed the mark with their pointed arrows of anti-Catholic criticism, nor were they aiming at the right target.

Finally, let us examine the results of their bitter rhetorical criticism against the Roman Catholic Church. In his book, Lutherans and Catholicism: The Changing Conflict, Myron A. Marty points out the area which was influenced most by this type of criticism. He states:

"The real significance of the rhetorical criticism in the press does not lie in its contribution to Lutheran-Catholic relations at the time that it was written. Rather, it is significant because it shaped the mentality of the hundreds of thousands of readers who were exposed to it."(35)

From the anti-Catholic rhetorical criticism of Sommer and Graebner, there seemed to evolve two different attitudes, or mind-

sets, within the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. The first attitude was one of conservative conviction against the actions and teachings of the Catholic Church. This attitude was based on one certain presupposition that Rome never changes. This view looked upon Catholic doctrine as being solidified by the Council of Trent and official Papal decrees. In one sense, this conservative attitude was valuable because it kept Lutherans strong in their confessional stance and reminded them of the teachings which made them distinctly Lutheran. On the other hand, this attitude had the negative effect of judging the Catholic Church to be evil and hostile in every aspect, fostering personal bias on social rather than religious matters.

The other attitude which resulted from the anti-Catholic rhetorical criticism of Sommer and Graebner was "evangelical concern". Marty describes this attitude:

"The writers...were evangelical in their approach, that is, they spoke in the spirit of the gospel. Readiness to seek and grant forgiveness and to work toward a more perfect expression of oneness in Christ is apparent throughout their writings....they were genuinely concerned about the specific problem of Lutheran-Catholic relations."(36)

The bitter criticism of Graebner and Sommer caused many Lutherans to examine their views toward the Catholic Church. They felt such criticism had little or no effect against the Catholic Church, and in turn, hindered the religious quality of the Lutheran Church. One such critic was Otto A. Geiseman, a Lutheran pastor in Chicago. In his article "A Suggestion Offered" (American Lutheran XVII), he stated: "We will do well to understand that raving and

ranting, and denunciation in and by itself will never serve to frustrate any designs which Roman Catholicism may have on America."(37) In a different article (American Lutheran XXIX), he pointed out what the Lutheran Church should focus its attention on: "Let us apply ourselves to the constructive task of helpfully, warm-heartedly and earnestly bringing the story of Christ and salvation to famished souls."(38)

The second factor which fueled this attitude of evangelical concern was the idea that theology in the Catholic Church was open to change. Earnest B. Koenker, a Valparaiso University professor, cited six evangelical trends in Catholicism: 1) increased Bible study, (2) restoration of wholeness to preaching, (3) catechetical renewal, (4) liturgical developments, (5) Una Sancta move, (6) greater appreciation of Luther.(39) Those with evangelical concern wanted to focus only on those elements which were common between the Lutheran and Catholic Church, and not the differences. There was hope of increased dialogue, of increased cooperation among Lutherans and Catholics in settling their problems. In an article entitled "The Coming Roman Catholic Council" (American Lutheran XLV), one writer states: "Our Roman Catholic fellow-Christians are not merely neighbors; they are our brothers in Christ, even though they may be separated brothers..."(40) It was quite a change from the rhetorical criticism of Graebner and Sommer.

This attitude of evangelical concern also had its drawbacks. It was built on the false assumption that Rome was willing to negotiate its theological positions in order to foster Christian unity. This has not materialized. In the area of Catholic-

Lutheran dialogue, this attitude was filled with ecumenical pipe dreams. In the area of doctrine, this attitude was willing in some cases to compromise for the sake of Christian unity. It was clear that it eroded the staunch Lutheran confessionalism Graebner and Sommer had fought so hard to establish through their writing.

It has been said that writing style takes its final shape more from attitudes than from principles of composition, and that writing is an act of faith, not a trick of grammar.(41) This was never more true than in the case of Martin Sommer and Theodore Graebner. They were confessional Lutherans, and their writing reflected that Christian faith they held most dear. Although at times they over-stepped the boundaries of literary taste in respect to their anti-Catholic rhetorical criticism, their strong confessional zeal for Lutheran teachings more than made up for it. The Roman Catholic Church received no leniency from these two writers concerning their false theology. They had run up against true Lutheran witnesses who were not afraid to confess the truths of the word of God. In this area, Graebner and Sommer were not worthy of the slightest criticism.

Endnotes

- 1) Luther, Martin. "Against the Roman Papacy, An Institution of the Devil", Luther's Works: Church and Ministry, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, p. 283.
- 2) Luther, p.259.
- 3) Willliam Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style, 3rd ed., New York: Macmillan, 1979, p.67.
- 4) Sommer, Roger L., "Martin Samuel Sommer", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly XXIII, Oct. 1950, No. 3, pp.123-131.
- 5) Sommer, p.163.
- 6) Sommer, p.163.
- 7) "In Memoriam: Theodore Graebner", Concordia Historical Institute, XXIII, Jan. 1951, p.182.
- 8) "In Memoriam", p.182.
- 9) Sommer, p.164.
- 10) Sommer, p.161.
- 11) Sommer, Martin S., "The Pope to the Rescue", Lutheran Witness XLIII, 26 Feb., 1924, p. 74.
- 12) Sommer, Martin S., "The Pope Ashamed of Italian Emigrants", Lutheran Witness XLVIII, 8 Jan., 1929, p.7.
- 13) Sommer, Martin S., "Restrain the Murderous Pope and Turk", Lutheran Witness LIII, 13 Feb., 1934, p.58.
- 14) Sommer, Martin S., "Freedom of the Press", Lutheran Witness XL, 26 April, 1921, p.136.
- 15) Graebner, Theodor, "The Most Stupendous Piece of Roman Propaganda", Lutheran Witness XLV, 1 June, 1926, p.177.
- 16) Sommer, Martin S., "Will Religious Wars Return", Lutheran Witness LVI, 24 Aug., 1937, p.279.
- 17) Graebner, Theodore, "Shriners and the Knights of Columbus", Lutheran Witness XLIII, 23 Sept., 1924, p.346.
- 18) Graebner, Theodore, "Doing Shares", Lutheran Witness XLII, 31 July, 1923, p.246.
- 19) Graebner, Theodore, "Not Forgetting the Hammer Blows", Lutheran Witness LIX, 23 Jan., 1940, p.19.
- 20) Sommer, Martin S., "Jesuitic Politics", Lutheran Witness XXXVI, 20 Feb., 1917, p.55.
- 21) Sommer, Martin S., "Another Jesuit Quitting", Lutheran Witness XLVII, 10 Jan., 1928, p.8.
- 22) "Another Jesuit Quitting", p.8.
- 23) Sommer, Martin S., "Ex-Priests", Lutheran Witness LIII, 23 Oct., 1934, p.370.

- 24) Sommer, Martin S., "Catholics and the K.K.K.", Lutheran Witness XLII, 30 Jan., 1923, p.37.
- 25) Graebner, Theodore, "Choice Between Ku Klux Klan and Romanism" Lutheran Witness XLIII, 21 Oct., 1924, p.379.
- 26) Sommer, Martin S., "The Catholic Church and the Bible", Lutheran Witness XLIII, 15 Jan., 1924, p.26.
- 27) Belloc, Hilare, "What Was the Reformation", Catholic World XCIV, Oct. 1911, p.33.
- 28) Belloc, Hilare, "What Was the Reformation", Catholic World XCIV, Dec. 1911, p.361.
- 29) Wooten, Dudley, "The Propaganda of Paganism", Catholic World CVI, Nov. 1917, p.157.
- 30) Wooten, p.164.
- 31) Sommer, Martin S., "Why Write Against Romanism?", Lutheran Witness LVI, 24 Aug., 1937, p.280.
- 32) Sommer, Martin S., "Helpful Criticism", Lutheran Witness XLV 23 May, 1922, p.168.
- 33) Sommer, Martin S., "Lutherans Are Debtors to the Catholics", Witness LXV, 12 March, 1946, p.84.
- 34) Sommer, Martin S., "Mark Twain and Romanism", Lutheran Witness LIX, 17 Sept., 1940, p.321.
- 35) Mary, Myron A., Lutheran and Roman Catholicism, London: Un. of Notre Dame Press, 1968, p.26.
- 36) Marty, p.38-39.
- 37) Geiseman, Otto A., "A Suggestion Offered", American Lutheran XVII, Sept. 1934, p.15.
- 38) Geiseman, Otto A., "While It Is Day", American Lutheran XXIX, May 1946, p.5.
- 39) Marty, p.48.
- 40) "The Coming Roman Catholic Council", American Lutheran XLV, Oct. 1962, p.3-4.
- 41) Strunk Jr. and White, p.84.

Bibliography

- 1) Empie, Paul C., Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.
- 2) Graebner, Theodore, The Pope and Temporal Power, Milwaukee: NPH, 1929.
- 3) Graebner, Theodore, The Dark Ages, St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1917.
- 4) Graebner, Theodore, "What Is Unionism", Concordia Theological Monthly, Aug. 1931, pp.565-582.
- 5) Graebner, Theodore, The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays, St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1935.
- 6) Marty, Myron A., Lutherans and Roman Catholicism, London: Un. of Notre Dame Press, 1968.
- 7) Rouse, Ruth, A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967.
- 8) Luther, Martin, Luther's Works: Church and Ministry, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- 9) Sommer, Roger L., "Martin Samuel Sommer", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly XXII, Oct. 1950, pp.123-131.
- 10) William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style, London: Macmillan Pub., 1979.
- 11) Martin Sommer and Theodore Graebner, eds. The Lutheran Witness (1914-1949: all issues).