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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer

The Church's Role in Postwar Rehabilitation. — **The Protestant Voice** of August 18 contained this statement, sent by wireless from Geneva, Switzerland: "The postwar period rather than the war itself will prove the decisive test of the ecumenical movement, according to the 1943-1944 annual report of the World Council of Churches. The Council, composed of 86 churches in 29 countries, places major emphasis on reconstruction needs, calling for 'close co-operation' by the denominations in practical work to rebuild church life in the war-affected countries. 'The last twelve months have been a time of crystallization and classification of ecumenical plans for reconstruction,' the Council's report states. It has become clear that the needs are so great that the task can only be accomplished if the churches collaborate very closely. Owing to the nature of the movement and the circumstances of the war, we have been forced to postpone consideration of the most difficult issues until we can meet again. Not today, but tomorrow the questions of true reconciliation on a level above hatred and sentimentality, of a common message to a broken world, will present themselves in all acuteness.' The wartime isolation of churches, according to the report, has to some extent been compensated by the fact that in certain places churchmen from different countries have had unexpected opportunities to meet. 'For the large number of military war prisoners, refugees, deported workers and exiles,' it says, 'not the least important by-product of the war is that which comes from personal contact with Christians of other countries. This migration has created opportunity for the ecumenical movement to hold meetings in the United States, Britain, Sweden, and Switzerland. This is one of the most unique and hopeful features of the present church situation, that even in the midst of war the churches are preparing for the reconstruction of church life. Churches involved in open or disguised conflict with present rulers of their countries still find time and energy to plan for new departures in realms of church order.' Dealing with the work of the Ecumenical Commission for War Refugees, the report states that while it has been possible to save only hundreds of the millions of exterminated European Jews, 'we are grateful the Church had an opportunity to manifest its solidarity with persecuted people.' The fifth year of the Ecumenical Commission for Chaplaincy Service for War Prisoners has seen prison camps provided with 'considerable libraries of religious literature' and 'well furnished with Bibles.' The report on Bible work says the demand for the Scriptures is great, particularly in countries suffering from the war. Where National Bible Societies are able to produce the Scriptures — as in Holland and Hungary — sales are higher than ever, but in the vast majority of continental countries the Societies are no longer able to print at all or can turn out only very inadequate quantities."

One reads a report of this kind with mingled feelings. Here there is striving for an improvement of the sad conditions which the war has created. The true remedy is only partly known. How grand if in

place of talking about the unification of the churches and finding in it the panacea for all ills there would be a recognition of the truth that what the world needs is the acceptance of the two principles of the Reformation, viz., that the Word of God, the Scriptures, must be the basis of our whole theology and that the chief doctrine to be proclaimed is that of justification by grace through faith. A.

The Lutheran Unity Movement in Australia.—Commenting favorably on the progress which the Lutheran unity movement has made in North America and adding some timely and valuable suggestions regarding its furtherance, Dr. H. Hamann, editor of the *Australasian Theological Review* (April—June, 1944, p. 59 ff.), closes his article with a brief review of the Lutheran unity movement in his own country. He writes: "This leads us to speak briefly of the discussions going on between representatives of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia and our own Church. For several years there have been meetings of committees appointed for that purpose, and hence styled 'official'; there have been many more meetings in various parts of the Commonwealth which are officially called 'unofficial.' Of the results of these latter conferences we know practically nothing. Of the 'official' meetings it may be said that a friendly spirit prevailed and manifested itself in mutual consideration and esteem, and that in some instances at least seeming differences were found to be due to a different theological terminology. Besides that, little or no progress has been made. When the discussions were resumed a few years ago—after a lapse of close to fifteen years, we believe—it was agreed by both parties that nothing was to be published except by mutual consent. Perhaps that was wise or prudent. For our part, we prefer the frank reports on the results of such conferences which we read in the *Lutheran Witness*. Joint statements under the terms of the agreement mentioned are likely to be of the colorless variety in which people euphemistically 'report progress.' However, there is one thing that we desire to say, and that can be said without violating the letter or the spirit of the self-imposed censorship. It is this. In its mission work in New Guinea, the U. E. L. C. A. has long been associated with the Lutherans who are now in the American Lutheran Church; it is actually and undeniably in fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. But the U. E. L. C. A. has never, as far as we are aware, publicly and officially defined its attitude toward the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church, nor toward the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod which that Declaration has endorsed. The same is true, as far as we know, of the Minneapolis Theses, to which the American Lutheran Conference has, as stated previously in this article, renewed its pledge of 'sincere and wholehearted adherence.' And yet, being directly in fellowship and communion with the American Lutheran Church, and indirectly with the American Lutheran Conference, the U. E. L. C. A. can hardly escape for any length of time the necessity—the moral obligation—of making known its position in the issues involved by declaring its attitude toward the documents mentioned. Our own Church accepts without question the Brief Statement; the writer believes that our Church would also, by a large majority,

approve of the action of the Missouri Synod in 1938 in declaring the Brief Statement and the Declaration a sufficient basis for future church-fellowship. Indeed, the approval might be unanimous. Be that as it may: if the U. E. L. C. A. would define its attitude toward these documents, or if it would signify its approval and acceptance of the first three paragraphs of the Minneapolis Theses, much that is now unclear would become clear as though by magic. We should have a very much better basis for discussions than that provided by interminable talks about minimum requirements. Dare we not hope that the leaders of the U. E. L. C. A. will recognize this fact, and will consent to begin discussions at the point where, in view of recent developments within the Lutheran Free Churches, they logically should begin?"

J. T. M.

The Bible in the Seminaries.—There is evidently a note of distress in the following editorial by Ernest Gordon in the *Sunday School Times* (Aug. 12, 1944) and perhaps, too, a little admonition for self-examination. He writes: "I strayed into the General Seminary (Episcopal), New York, of late, and enjoyed again the modeling of the chapel doors and the lovely stained glass with their representation of almost every Biblical incident. But the standard of knowledge which the windows set seems hardly to have been reached by the student body. On the notice board at the seminary entrance are these menacing sentences: 'The attention of those Middlers who have failed in English Bible, New Testament, is drawn to the fact that there will be a re-examination given in February. I am instructed by the faculty to state that the seriousness of the situation and the possibly unhappy results to those involved cannot be too greatly stressed or taken to heart.' An article in the *Presbyterian* speaks of the poor showing made generally by candidates for the ministry in English Bible, and remarks on how rarely in theological seminaries the English Bible is made central to undergraduate study. As an ideal in the matter, the writer recalls the course at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville. 'Under the late Dr. A. T. Robertson, who for forty-five years was head of the New Testament department, we have sat in silence while the undergraduate students recited and while Dr. Robertson lectured. It was the usual consensus of opinion among the Presbyterian graduate students present that not one of us could have stood the examinations given by 'Dr. Bob' in this course, upon the basis of our undergraduate work in our own seminaries. This English New Testament course required more actual hard study than perhaps any other single course in the seminary. This Bible study was the basis for the courses in theology, and Church History was also related to it."

J. T. M.

Rationalistic Theology in Modern Fiction.—Under this heading, *America* (Sept. 2, 1944) publishes a criticism of some of our modern religious fiction, which, because of its merits, we wish could be reprinted here in its entirety. Since the lack of space does not permit this, we shall offer only a few paragraphs. After a graceful, appealing introduction, Harold C. Gardiner writes: "*The Robe*, as you know, is setting records as a best-seller; somewhat to our chagrin, it has had a long run in *America's Book-Log*; Catholics by the thousands have read it, and

perhaps been helped and edified by it, but I will herewith be bold and challenging enough to say that their edification was and is in inverse ratio to their knowledge of Christ. For one who has studied or even read attentively the Gospels, the book cannot possibly, I feel, appear other than a caricature of Christ. Theology enters the book; for any attempt to delineate Him, to unfold His character, it must touch upon the mystery of His Personality, and that is a matter for the Queen of Sciences [theology]; but it is a theology that has become humbled and distorted. That this is the character of the book need not cause much amazement; that this character has not been recognized for what it is by Catholics should cause a little heart-searching. For what has Mr. Douglas done to Christ in that book? He has spun his ideas of Christ out of his own mind, or perhaps out of a one-sided reading of the Gospels. He has formed the idea that Christ was essentially a social reformer, whose blue-print, be it remarked, was extremely vague and shadowy in his own mind—at least, if that mind was understood by the Apostles. Peter, the 'Big Fisherman,' and all his companions knew only that they were to gather some sort of communities about them, and that their great care was to be the succoring of the poor, and interminable talk about peace for all the world like a group of modern pacifists. This is not to present Christ as He historically was; this is to construct an imaginary Christ first, and then to turn to the Gospels to cull passages and incidents that apparently put flesh and blood upon that phantasm. The same precise literary rationalism vitiates the recent attempt of the Congregationalist minister J. R. Perkins to deal with Christ in his *The Emperor's Physician*. Here Christ is the Great Healer, and though the author does refer to the cures as miracles, Christ remains on his pages still a mere man, working, it is true, with Divinely-given powers, but not speaking out with that majestic sense of His own, proper, absolute Divine power which flashes forth in the Gospel pages. Again, Sholem Asch's *The Nazarene* presents Christ under the exclusive aspect of being the greatest of the Rabbis. This distortion runs through his later *The Apostle* as well, though it is not so dominant, for the simple reason that Christ is not an actual character in the book. If it be interjected here that Asch cannot well be tarred with the same brush of liberal Protestantism, since he is a Jew, the answer is that *The Apostle* is unmistakable evidence that, Protestant or not, he has been infected with the rationalism of the Higher Criticism. His insistence, in this second novel, on the dichotomy of the early Church into Petrine and Pauline factions stems from the German critical rationalism of the nineteenth century. One further example is at hand. It is a book that will not attract much attention, for it is quite second-rate, but it is another clear instance of liberal theology influencing the arts. In Dorothy Clarke Wilson's *The Brother* (yes, again the weary, hoary myth of Our Lady's children—this time seven!) Christ is simply a Jew of his day, motivated by 'the Dream' to establish the 'God-fearing community.' This is to be done by what we would call these days an underground movement. And so Christ emerges from these mediocre pages as simply a temporal liberator. Two other books to be published soon will deal with Christ. They are *The Impostor* and *The Way*, and I think

it is safe to predict that they will be the same story over again—the characterization of Christ not according to the objective facts as history gives them, but according to the rationalistic preconception that it is simply impossible and absurd to think that God ever did or could become Man.”

J. T. M.

“Irresponsible Marriage.—According to the *Woman's Home Companion's* ‘Eye-Opening Quiz’ for September, although it is false that divorce laws have become more liberal in the last fifty years (‘the trend in nearly every State has been toward making divorce and remarriage of the divorced more difficult’), still, if the present trend continues, ‘by 1965 we may expect fifty-one per cent of American marriages to end in divorce.’ It may seem hard to reconcile these two statements. Supposing that they are both true, the explanation seems to lie in the fact that more and more couples are finding excuses (the plea of ‘cruelty’ in two fifths of the cases) to appeal to the stricter legal grounds.

“In other words, more and more couples are entering marriage with little or no realization of the obligations they assume. Let the laws become as strict as you will, couples who enter marriage frivolously and who do not want to stay married will not stay married. They will find a way to get in under even the strictest law.

“This is a horribly clear example of the truth that reason and history both prove: give human nature an inch in moral matters, and it will take an ell. Grant divorce for some reasons, and even if those same reasons do not degenerate into every reason, those who want to shirk can find that the some reasons fit them.

“There is only one cure for this pestilence. The State cannot cure it; only the individual's own deep realization that marriage is for life, that it entails sobering, if joyful and glorious, responsibility, can reform the decadence that has substituted legalized prostitution for a Sacrament of Christ.”—*America*, September 2, 1944.

[The view that marriage is a Sacrament we, of course, reject. Not every divine institution is a Sacrament and conveys to us the forgiveness of sins.—EDITORS.]

The Inconsistency of a Modernist Romanticist.—In the *Sunday School Times* (Aug. 12, 1944), Ernest Gordon in his special department “A Survey of Religious Life and Thought” briefly records his impressions of his “first and only visit to the Riverside Church.” He writes: “The sermon was on ‘taking Jesus seriously.’ John fell at His feet as dead; Harry Emerson Fosdick discusses Him. The question arose in my mind whether we should take Harry Emerson Fosdick seriously. Dr. Fosdick does not believe ‘in angels or the resurrection.’ Yet perched on the ridgepole of his big church is a gilded angel with trumpet, similar to the one on the near-by cathedral of St. John. It is well to be in fashion even at the expense of one's expressed unbelief. Dr. Fosdick does not believe in the Cross as having aught to do with man's redemption. Yet up in the foreground of his church is a great glowing cross of gold, the most striking feature in the chancel. The opening hymn is ‘All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name, Let Angels Prostrate Fall,’ which we sing full-throatedly, and feel no sense of ‘peril’ to our souls in ‘worshipping’

the Lord Jesus Christ after this fashion. Dr. Fosdick dispenses with the Gospel story of the virgin birth of Christ; yet at the four-o'clock service the hymn sung is *Ave Maria Stella*:

Bright Mother of our Maker, hailed
Thou Virgin ever blest;
The ocean's star, by which we sailed
And gain the port of rest.

At the Vesper Service another Romish anthem is announced: *Ave Verum Corpus Natum de Maria Virgine*. I notice in the church appointments 'Posture-rhythmic Classes'; also 'Arts and Crafts'; also 'Forum on Religion in the Bowling Alley Club Room'; also 'Daytime and Evening Classes for Hobbyists Throughout the Week'; but none for Bible study, where a 'Modern Use of the Bible' could be practiced. Nor is any weekly prayer meeting announced, in spite of the fact that the minister has written attractively about prayer." J. T. M.

The Difference Between Fundamentalists and Modernists. — On this subject a correspondent of the *Watchman-Examiner* (September 14, 1944) urges that it is wrong to hold the difference consists in the way in which Scripture is interpreted. He very correctly states that the difference lies in this, that the one party accepts the teaching of Scriptures, the other party does not. "The Word of God teaches that there is a personal devil; the contrary one says there is not. The Word of God teaches that Christ was born of a virgin through the intervention of the Creator; the others teach that He had an earthly father. The Word of God teaches that Christ arose from the dead, a bodily resurrection, since He showed them His hands and His feet; *they* say it was not a bodily resurrection. The Word of God teaches that Christ will return 'as ye have seen Me go.' *They* say — well, they say so many different things that it is hard really to locate their belief. Some say He returned on the day of Pentecost, others that He comes at every conversion, others that it is at death He comes. Others say He has come many times in the various great Christian movements. But none of their teaching fits into the clear declaration of God's Word. The Word of God, in both the Old and New Testaments, teaches that God, directly or through human agents, has wrought miracles. These contrary ones believe and teach that there have been and are no miracles. So one might go on citing what God's Word clearly states; and something very different, frequently the very opposite, which 'Modernists' — who in fact are not modern — teach. The real issue is whether the Bible means what it says, or, to put it in another way, whether God means what He says in His Word." That is well put. It hits the nail on the head. Modernists do not differ merely in their interpretation of the Scriptures, but in their whole attitude toward the Scriptures. A.

Unwarranted Killings Condemned by the Confessional Church of Germany. — In order that our readers may obtain a better picture of conditions that prevail in Germany at present, we submit an item from the *Living Church* which dwells on a declaration made by the Confessional Church of Germany. We print the item in its entirety. —

"In the strongest anti-Nazi declaration it has made to date the German Confessional Church has issued a 3,000-word statement. con-

demning the killing of human beings other than in war and berating Germans for failing to speak out against violations of 'God's commandments.' The statement was addressed to Church congregations in Germany during the past few weeks.

"The Nazi party is not mentioned by name, but the message nevertheless clearly indicts the party and its supporters. More than half the text deals with violations of the fifth commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill.'

"The message sharply attacks the practice of euthanasia and the 'liquidation' of racial groups, emphasizing that the State is not authorized to use the sword for any other purpose than for the death of criminals or of enemies in warfare.

"All that it does beyond this is done arbitrarily, to its own harms,' the Confessional leaders say. 'Whenever the life of human beings is destroyed for any other reasons, trust and confidence can no longer exist between men; the fellowship of the community is destroyed. The divine world order knows no such term as 'to expunge,' 'to liquidate,' or 'valueless life' with regard to human beings. To slay human beings simply because they are related to criminals, because they are old or mentally afflicted, or because they belong to a different race, is not the use of the sword sanctioned by Scripture.

"Discussing other types of 'killings' the message adds, 'There is an indirect way of killing or depriving one's neighbor of all that is necessary for life or by omitting to save him when he is in danger of death. It is contrary to God's will to destroy life before birth. In the truest sense of the word, killing also includes every kind of insult, such as mockery, calumny, bringing a fellow being into disrepute. In the same category there are also every form of cheating, depriving a fellow being of that which is due to him, causing a man to lose his job, gloating over other people's misfortune, hatred and revenge.

"It is God's will that we should hold every man's life in respect. Life is of great value in God's sight, even though human beings may esteem it as of no worth.'

"The message calls on Christian Germans to 'confess with contrite hearts' the guilt of 'sharing in neglect and disregard of the Divine commands.'"

A.

The Christian Century's Warning Concerning Reliability of Atrocity Stories.— We here reprint an editorial of the *Christian Century*.

"No atrocity story of the year is likely to top the latest concerning the alleged killing of 1,500,000 persons at the German concentration camp near Lublin, Poland. W. H. Lawrence of the *New York Times* was a member of the party of thirty journalists who were taken on a tour of the camp by a body called the Soviet-Polish Atrocities Investigation Commission. He described it as 'a veritable River Rouge for the production of death.' The victims were shipped there from all over Europe, the correspondents were told, were asphyxiated in gas chambers and their bodies cremated in huge furnaces. Chief evidence for the charge that 1,500,000 persons were killed in this manner was a warehouse 'about 150 feet long' containing clothing of people of all ages who were said to have been done to death in the camp. As many as 18,000 persons

a day were said to have been killed in the camp, although the capacity of the cremating furnaces was estimated to have been 1,900 per day. Maurice Hindus, who was another of the thirty correspondents, also reported the 1,500,000 figure. He said the warehouse contained 820,000 pairs of shoes. Many newspapers gave the Lublin charges the big headline of the day, but the parallel between this story and the 'corpse factory' atrocity tale of the First World War is too striking to be overlooked. That story started in 1917 and was not finally discredited until 1925. There may or may not be a relation between the fact that the Lublin account came out immediately after it was charged by London Poles that the Russians had stopped their advance within artillery range of Warsaw and waited until the Germans had killed 250,000 Poles within the city who had risen to fight for their freedom in response to the call of the Polish government-in-exile." A.

Brief Items.—The *Lutheran* reports that people of Minnesota are being asked to adopt the following pledge: "I will never by rumor or careless generalization indict a whole race or religious group by reason of the delinquency of a few members. . . . I will daily deal with every man in business, social, and political realms solely on the basis of his individual worth." It strikes one as strange that a special pledge of this kind is submitted. Why not start a propaganda asking people to pledge obedience to the Ten Commandments?

Replying to a man who accused preachers of being fifty years behind the times and of trying to force the same old "hokum" down the throats of the people, a daily paper said: "The gentleman might just as well have said, 'The preachers are two thousand years behind the times,' because that is when what he called 'hokum' originated. What he calls 'hokum' happens to be the Gospel of the New Testament given to the world by Christ, the Founder of our faith and our Church. And no preacher of this Gospel will cease preaching it regardless of whom it keeps away from church."

According to the *Protestant Voice* 32 million young Americans have returned to the public schools this fall. It is expected that of this number more than 1,500,000 children from grade and high schools will be enrolled in classes conducted by churches under a weekday-religious-education plan.

Clairvoyants, who claim to visualize things unseen by common folk, have a realistic way of adapting the materialistic things of this world to their operations. At least those in Belgium who have been divining, among other ways, by reading coffee grounds (no longer available), have abandoned that way of uncovering the things invisible to the earthly mind. Instead, they are asking their "clients" to bring an egg, so that the future may authoritatively be read in the yolk. Afterward the seer has an omelet.—*The Lutheran*.

Just a little over a century ago the American Bible Society completed the first Bible in raised Roman letters for the blind. It now offers a complete Bible on 169 Talking-Book records to the sightless. The Bible is the longest Talking Book so far produced, the total reading

time being 84½ hours. . . . The Talking-Book records cannot be played on the ordinary phonograph, but are played on a "Talking-Book" machine, which has been especially constructed so that blind people can easily operate it by touch. — *Bible Society Record*, Sept. 1944.

In an article published in the *Christian Century* of September 20 E. Stanley Jones discusses the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The white horse he regards as signifying imperialism: "Imperialism always rides forth on the white horse—a just cause, an altruistic mission, an immaculate purpose." For the other horsemen he has the well-known explanation (war, famine, death).

In New York recently the 2,495th birthday of Confucius was observed. Speeches were delivered by Wendell L. Willkie and H. H. Kung, Vice-Premier of China and lineal descendant of the great Chinese philosopher. — *Exchange*.

Religious music and a religious message will be broadcast each weekday except Saturday from Station WHAS, Louisville, without commercial sponsorship or solicitation of funds. C. E. Burns, formerly president of Milligan College, Tenn., will be in charge. His title will be "religious co-ordinator" of the station, which is owned by the *Courier Journal*. This is a new program, and it is rendered as a public service.

Christian Century

Pumiri Y. Rathnam of India, here to study our customs, declared Christianity the chief hope of his country. He said that "although there are only 8,000,000 Christians in India, they are making a dent on the customs of the other 400,000,000." — *Christian Century*.

A ruling that Jehovah's Witnesses do not have a constitutional right to approach hotel residents for the purpose of proselytizing over the protest of the hotel manager has been issued in Los Angeles by the Appellate Department of the Los Angeles Superior Court. The decision upheld the conviction of Mrs. Grace Vaughn and Leon F. Scheerer, members of the sect, on a charge of "disturbing the peace." Attorneys for the defendants held that, in the interest of maximum freedom of expression of religious subjects, persons had a constitutional right to approach hotel tenants directly without permission of a hotel manager. The Southern California branch of the American Civil Liberties Union co-operated in the appeal. — *Lutheran Standard*.

