

Concordia Theological Monthly

Volume 17

Article 1

1-1-1946

Foreword

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Concordia Theological Monthly

Edited by
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
ST. LOUIS, MO.



42,304

St. Louis, Mo.
CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE
1946

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Concordia *Theological Monthly*

Vol. XVII

JANUARY, 1946

No. 1

FOREWORD

I

God be praised! The firing has ceased, the unparalleled carnage is ended, the weary troops are returning home, the activities of peace are gradually resumed. Though in some countries the war continues, the United States no longer is involved. In His mercy the great Ruler of the Universe has once more called to the thundering billows of war, mountainous in their height, all-devastating in their fury: "Be still!" and the wild sea is growing quiet. All who will hear He bids in a different sense: "Be still!" adding, "and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth," Ps. 46:10.

II

But while the warfare has been terminated, the woe and misery which it has caused abides and even daily grows in extent and intensity. Who can count them, the millions of people that have to pass through the winter without sufficient food, clothing, and shelter, helpless victims of the catastrophe, and among them "more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand!" It would take a Jeremiah properly to describe the sufferings that have descended on vast multitudes in Central Europe and in Asia. "All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul. See, O God, and consider, for I am become vile," Lam. 1:11. The Christian people on the globe have often had their sym-

pathies aroused by accounts of floods, famines, or earthquakes that ravaged large sections of humanity, but never within the memory of living men have there been reports of distress equaling those reaching us now. The "white horse" (invasion) and the "red horse" (war) have trampled the fair fields and gone their way; the "black horse" (famine) and the "pale horse" (death) are now occupying the scene and reveling in the devastation they cause. This is a time, if there ever was one, to heed the divine injunction: "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" Is. 58:7.

III

Withal mankind has entered a new era, not only through the conclusion of the unprecedented bloodshed and destruction, but through the breath-taking forward strides of science in various directions. It is with profound awe that one contemplates the human mind's daring penetration into the secrets of the universe, as one page after the other of nature's wonder book is laid open before our amazed eyes. It will undoubtedly always remain true that the real mainspring of life lies beyond human ken, because the source of our existence is none other than God Himself, infinite in power and majesty. "Ins Innre der Natur dringt kein erschaffener Geist." But one must admit that curious man has become remarkably successful in removing with deft and vigorous strokes some of the heavy veils hiding the mysterious workshop of the globe from our view. Stupendous progress in the field of applied science, through harnessing atomic power, "these dread, pent-up forces" (Churchill), will probably be witnessed in the next decades. It may be that our way of living will be revolutionized, as it was through the advent of the steam engine and the invention of innumerable electrical devices. In startled wonder and with uneasy expectancy the human race faces the future, for, alas! the energies that possess indescribable constructive possibilities can likewise, as we see very plainly, be made dire instruments of destruction and death. Climbing upward on the hill of science means for man that he attains greater heights from which to plunge down to all the more certain ruin.

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IV

While science opens a new book, natural man himself remains the same—a sinful, selfish, covetous, God-defying being; becoming ever more clever, he likewise grows constantly more determined in opposing the divine will. The strife of international power politics, the disregard of the dictates of justice and fairness in the various human relations, the clashes between capital and labor, the cold, merciless scramble for advantages, violating without hesitation one's brother's rights and feelings, the crime waves that burst upon the countries of the world—all attest unerringly man's innate evil nature. If anybody hoped that under the scourge of war man would learn a lesson and begin to control and curb his wicked, selfish inclinations and desires, he has been disillusioned. Not in human wisdom and decision can a change for the better be expected. The outlook is so distressing that H. G. Wells, the famous English man of letters, freely predicts the early extinction not only of our culture and civilization, but of the human race itself. As he sees the situation, man is simply doomed and will soon disappear, and he hesitates to hazard a guess as to the kind of being that will displace the present occupants of our globe.

V

And yet a remedy is available, provided by the love of God. It is none other than the Cross of Jesus Christ. St. Peter wrote his Epistles to people that had been servants and perpetrators of wickedness; but a total change had come, and if his words dwelling on this change were not familiar to us from the days of our childhood, we should read them with utter amazement: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. 1:18-19. Christ purchased freedom for us not only from the guilt and punishment, but also from the dominion of sin. He that truly believes in Him and accepts His help is rescued from these evil forces that constantly pull us downward, and though they still do much tugging, their mastery is broken.—One's thoughts here travel to the city of Corinth in St. Paul's days, where the

Apostle, assisted by Silas and Timothy, in one and a half year's time gathered a large congregation. In their midst he had preached nothing save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. What had been the result? A number of transgressors of divine and human law had accepted Christ, joining others who had been members of the synagog, and to all of them the Apostle could say, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. 6:11. The case of these Corinthians confirmed the general statement of the Apostle: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. 5:17. The Bible teaching, then, very definitely states that man can be changed for the better and that the change is effected by man's kneeling at the Cross of Calvary and recognizing Jesus as his divine Savior—an act which is brought about by the Spirit of God through the Word.

VI

The history of the Church and of Christian missions abounds in evidences of the power of the Cross for checking man's evil tendencies and making him a being that is actuated by love rather than by selfishness. In the Roman Empire, when Christianity gradually became the universally accepted religion, slavery began to disappear, execution by crucifixion was abolished, the treatment of women and children improved, the sick and the poor were cared for, the gross immoralities that had been in vogue were forbidden, and order and decency were promoted. The islands of the Pacific figure in reports of missionaries and travelers relating how dreadful cannibalism and savage institutions have fled at the advent of the Bible, and how kindness and sympathetic interest now reign where formerly cruelty and covetousness were in absolute command. It is true that the recent dreadful wars waged between so-called Christian nations seem to contradict these assertions concerning the power of the Christian message; but in reality they do not have this significance. In some instances the instigators of the wars were plainly not disciples of Jesus Christ. In other instances the rulers, though opposed to war, were unable to resist iniquitous forces, which dragged the nations toward the abyss. That Christians did not assert

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themselves sufficiently must be admitted. Not the Christianity of our leading nations, but the fact that this Christianity was very imperfect and that the direction of events was largely exercised by non-Christian elements was responsible for the catastrophes.

VII

If, then, the present and succeeding years are to see the achievement of any real progress along the road of peace and understanding between the nations of the world, it will have to be through the preaching and acceptance of the blessed Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Human hearts will have to be filled with the spirit of love, and there is no other means for realizing this objective than the message of the Cross. If the truth of this statement cannot be doubted, how we Christians, and especially we Christian pastors, must bestir ourselves to take the news of the Savior to those of our fellow men who are not acquainted with it or who, in blind ignorance, have hitherto refused to listen to its call! The ground beneath our feet should prove too hot for us if we stand idle and unwilling to go forward. The world is being drowned and dying in its own blood; what it requires is the proclamation of Him who "died that I might live on high, and lived that I might never die." We have the message of life. Can we afford to be dilatory in the endeavors to make the earth resound with the blessed tidings that true life can be bought "without money and without price"? "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Is. 52:7.

VIII

The above shows sufficiently that we reject the view of many thinkers that what the world needs is instruction in morals. It is implied, too, that we spurn the view of Modernists who exalt the Cross of Christ and call it all important, but who look upon Jesus as having furnished merely a grand example. Ethics, we say, has no power to rescue men from their innate selfishness. It is plain, too, that we cannot endorse the view often heard that what is necessary is that the Christian denominations of the earth unite and then jointly

march forward in a holy crusade undertaken to make this a better world. We certainly deplore the divisions of Christendom, but to believe that what is required in this hour is the uniting of Christian denominations at any and every cost is something we must regard as absolutely false. The idea widely prevalent that education is the one requisite of our times is likewise untenable. The trouble in 1939 was not that the peoples of the globe were too little educated. The very country where education had scored its greatest triumphs, Germany, was the one which applied the torch to the powder keg. When will people learn that mere cleverness, external culture and refinement, wide scholarship, and profound learning are not a safeguard against the horrors which our age has witnessed! Everything of this sort, while we acknowledge that the suggestions usually are well meant, is futile. It is the Cross of Christ that has to do it.

IX

We cannot conclude these brief remarks without stating our conviction that the Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be preached effectively save as coming to us in the divinely inspired, the inerrant Scriptures. If the reliability of this Gospel rests merely on the report contained in some human historical records telling us that Jesus, the Son of God, and His followers taught this message; in other words, if the New Testament writings and the whole Bible are brought down to the level of writings like those of Josephus and Tacitus, then the power of the Christian proclamation is gone, the tree is killed at its very roots. But if we go before the world, as did the early Christians, with the joyous assurance that the Holy Spirit has given us this teaching in infallible writings, the Gospel can do its blessed work. Besides, we must state as our conviction that this message of the Cross has found expression in its fullness and power in the Lutheran Confessions, especially the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism. Not to dethrone the Scriptures, but to state briefly and tersely the chief tenets of our belief, we declare that in these Confessions the doctrines of the Christian faith are correctly and clearly set forth and that in these documents the emphasis is placed where it belongs, on the doctrine of justification by grace through faith.

The reference to the Lutheran Confessions reminds one that 1946 brings an important Luther anniversary, the quadricentennial of his entrance into true life. It is the intention of the Editorial Committee of the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY to utilize the occasion for the publication of articles taking cognizance of the anniversary, evaluating the significance of the great Reformer, and refuting some ugly slanders and misrepresentations of this chosen instrument of God. May all of us in this period of anxiety, of spiritual blindness and confusion, be loyal followers of our father Luther and honor his memory by faithfully proclaiming the message of God's grace and the redemption of Jesus Christ.

W. ARNDT

Luther the Reformer

By TH. ENGELDER

Luther would say: I did not reform the Church. He said: "It was God's Word which, while I slept or made merry, accomplished this great thing." (XX:20.) The gracious and almighty God accomplished this great thing. "What is now going on in the world is not my doing. It is not possible that a mere man should begin and carry forward such a movement. . . . Another man is at the wheel [Ein anderer Mann ist's, der das Raedlein treibt]." (X:368.)

Still we shall call Luther the Reformer. God called Luther to reform His Church. God raised him up to restore to the Church His all-but-forgotten Word. And knowing the condition and dire need of the Church today, we shall find it profitable to inquire once again into the nature of the divine message through which the Reformer revived the dying Church.

Luther restored to the Church, first, the all-but-forgotten Gospel of the grace of God. Preaching the *sola gratia*, Luther delivered the Church from the incubus which was smothering her to death. "The power of Antichrist was broken chiefly through the preaching of the Gospel of the free grace of God in Christ." (Walther, *Evangelien-Postille*, p. 388.)

The Christian lives by the Gospel of grace. "That is the very nature of the Christian faith, that it looks to grace alone, 'auf lauter Gnade baut,' as the Lutheran Confession declares,

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