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Fighter and Friend

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Caemmerer: Fighter and Friend

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

Fighter and Friend
RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

Luther's View of Man in His Early German
Writings
HEINZ BLUHM

Martin Luther and the Idea of Monasticism
HEINZ BLUHM

Homiletics
Theological Observer
Book Review

VOL. XXXIV

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No. 10

Caemmerer: Fighter and Friend

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CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY
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Fighter and Friend

By RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

During the season of the Reformation Festival we do well to focus our thinking on two facets, at opposite poles and yet totally together, in the career and in the person of the great Reformer: that Luther was a fighter and that Luther was a friend. We would think about this fact obviously not just to say "How peculiar!" or "How interesting!" but in order that this fighting spirit, this friendly spirit, might become ingrained and fused in the heart and in the career of every one of us.

The basis for this lesson is set forth in two sayings of Jesus in the Gospel According to Matthew. In the 10th chapter He says: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (vv. 34-36). And in the 11th chapter He says: "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." (Vv. 28-30)

What makes this paradox preachable is that our Lord exemplified it, that He is talking about His own ministry to the world, the impact of His own cross and redemption upon men. Indeed, men were set against Him. It was men that put Him to death. It was leaders of the people that conspired against Him. It was quoters of the sacred Scriptures that nailed Him to

the cross. He viewed this with supreme horror. But a few verses prior to the "Come unto Me" passage we have some of His most blistering denunciations upon those who could not tell that the grace of God was in their own midst.

We sometimes worry—not only sometimes but almost constantly—in our own time and in our own church about the soggy and diluted and lackluster and sometimes quite hidden quality of our own proclamation of the Gospel. It suffers from what a student of mine called lack of explicitness. We are mysteriously frightened to say it aloud. Some of this fear is due to the fact that when you say it aloud and you say it plainly and you talk the blood, you seemingly lay a callus over the ears of the very people who should be taking it in and you ally yourself with everything you hate from obscurantism to spiritism.

But you do not solve the problem of simple food by withholding food. You do not solve the problem of sameness by the device of the zero. How does it happen that preachers and students and professors and all of us from time to time and too often are tongue-tied about laying the full gift of God in Christ Jesus plainly before the minds of our people and pressing and rubbing it in?

Part of the answer lies in this that we are also terribly afraid to stand up and be counted on what we call the Law, that we are afraid to denounce unbelief and call death death; that we do not quake with terror before the power of an avenging God and are too ineffably tender at

causing the man before us to quake with the recognition of who He is and that He is, indeed, a jealous God and that His wrath is evident already in our age against those who have turned away from Him. We are afraid to interpret to people the immediacy, the dreadful immediacy of the fact that God holds us in judgment for our lives, made us for His purposes, and recoils in His wrath over our failure to do His will. The Gospel of God alone is God's answer to this predicament, to this dread death, to this horrible spiritual rigor mortis that besets men here and now.

And so there is no such thing as preaching Gospel. We always preach Law and Gospel or we do not preach at all, we only make sermons, we only behave ourselves as pleasant men in an apathetic and torpid world. This is a thing, indeed, that we could learn from our Lord Christ, that He could flame in indignation and He could beseech with kindness. We could learn from St. Paul that he could speak of the bewitched Galatians as youngsters whom he had brought to birth, for whom he had been simultaneously mother and midwife at their coming into the world, and whom he could cause to face the curse that had to be laid on those who had misled them.

So we have to realize that we are not really talking about a paradox—two things

that exclude each other and yet have to be woven together. We are talking about two sides of one and the same coin and these two sides in God the Father and in God the Son, and in God's saints through the ages, and they had better be in us. For, indeed, we are to be the exponents and agents of God's love reaching out to men with the gift of His own dearest and best, His dear Son in whom He is well pleased and whom He gave up for the sins of us all. Our whole spiritual and churchly life is to be but a remembrance, a remembrance of that gift.

In one and the same moment we have to be, with God and the Lord Christ and His saints, terribly concerned over the torpor of people, terribly concerned over their blindness and the hardness of their heart and the alienation of their affections and the "Who gives a care?" of 1963 man. We have to be terribly concerned because somehow we need to prick that dead spirit awake by the very thrust of the knife and the rapier of our concern, that people might hear the Law of God as holy, just, and good, the Law which plunges us headlong into the realization of our need.

And so how fine to be heirs of a God and of a man who could be simultaneously fighter and friend.

St. Louis, Mo.