

# Concordia Theological Monthly



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ARCHIVES

## BRIEF STUDIES

### TOWARD A MISSIONARY CHURCH

[Professor Heinrich Rendtorff of Kiel University publishes in *Evangelische Welt*, Bielefeld, October 16, 1954, a concluding chapter to a larger work on home missions and evangelism in contemporary Germany. The article is helpful for understanding problems incident to a state church, yet many observations pertain also to the American situation.—Translated by R. R. CAEMMERER.]

Evangelism in Germany confronts a situation which is common in its fundamentals to all churches of Christendom. Also Germany is in the days of the great apostasy, for which a long history of secularization has prepared it and which now has reached a climax. Also in Germany the vacuum created by displacement of church and Christianity is being filled with religious, cultural, and political substitutes. Also Germany has experienced in the past generation open hostility and outright persecution toward Christianity. Even more potent than direct antagonism has been the social upheaval, which leaves the individual defenseless against the tide of mass movement. As never before, our eyes are being opened to the thoroughness with which this process works toward human change.

As in the rest of the world, so also in Germany the historical Christian churches confront this ominous condition but limply. For centuries churches lived in a world which allowed them peaceful cultivation and development. Now the great apostasy, hostility toward religion, inner change of man, finds them unprepared. Their preached word and their services have not kept pace with change, so that their message simply does not reach the alienated, godless masses.

But also in Germany the churches know that God's will, in judgment, mercy, and promise, remains unchanged toward this apostate and alien world.

Against the background of this common Christian situation it becomes clear what is unique about the German situation for evangelism. It can be summarized in the one word *Volkskirche* (national church). To a degree greater than the American can imagine, churchly life in Germany is shaped through the form of the national church, now hundreds of years old. It is a church made up of those born and baptized into it. Ninety-five per cent of the German people were thus born into a Christian church to which they belong as long as they do not consciously object to it and leave it. This close relation between church and people has, on the one hand, had the great blessing that up to this point the church had a right to address almost all of the

people as its own members. On the other hand, the national church suffers from the terrible delusion that the people are Christian and that it is sufficient simply to preserve their traditional churchliness. This national church stands between modern society, which is lost from God, and the will and mandate of God to rescue it.

Old-style evangelism thus has a task which it cannot lay aside in the area of the national church. Both free churches and territorial churches are busy with evangelism. A great number of tents circulate constantly. By every means the effort is being made to bring the missionary word, in churches and halls, in parks and streets, in movies and barracks, in mass meetings and small cells. But evangelism must recognize with dismay that it succeeds less and less in invading the alienated masses, and that basically faithful congregations and groups are the ones that gather. Mass evangelism suffers by working like a traveling thunder-shower that barely moistens the ground. The evangelistic attack fails, since no congregation stands behind it to catch up the people who have been addressed and to incorporate them with itself and lead them on.

Thus, along with gratitude toward special evangelism during the past generation the recognition becomes clear that the attack upon the world may not remain a matter of specialists, whether you call them free-church evangelists or churchly home missionaries, but that the mission to the world is a matter of the church itself. Every operation of an individual is too small in contrast to the need of a lost world; the church as a whole must be marshaled for attack. That follows not merely from fear and from the realization of the magnitude of the task; that follows from the rediscovery of the nature of the church. The Lord Christ has indeed called His people out of the world, but only to summon them immediately into His task and to send them into the world. Either the church is a mission church, a church for enlistment and witness, or it is not the church of Jesus Christ.

This implies a shift of accent in evangelism. It must be not the work of single or small groups, but the work of the church as its commission in the world. For the church this is a radical change. After centuries of accustomed preservation and nurture, it must now renew itself in repentance and faith to be a missionary church. As yet it is not competent for this transformation. But several directions of a new beginning are apparent. These beginnings have such great promise since they give the church the assurance that the Word and Spirit of God are indeed strong enough for the present situation.

Through the entire evangelical church of Germany goes a deep struggle for the renewing of the message. Only the one, old, simple Gospel of the crucified, risen Christ has promise for the need of the world. This we learned gratefully from old-style evangelism. That proved itself in the troubled days of the struggle of the Confessing Church. That proves to be valid step by step in evangelical practice. Every admixture of moral, educational, cultural, and political elements must yield in the proclamation to this clear central message. Hand in hand with this accent comes a determined, fresh approach to the world. "God so loved the world" — therewith is meant the world in which we live. The stubborn, inward bent of the church, where its Lord is present in Word and Sacrament, must turn with determination to the outside. The real world with its questions and needs, its problems and trials, lies before the church like a wholly new, only slightly touched field. The aim is not the welfare but the salvation of this world. Roads have to be sought and found that are wholly new, in order to lead into this world. Wholly new must be the language which we must learn in order to reach the ear of men in the world. Visible signs of this new turn are especially the evangelical academies. The most evident sign of all are the great *Kirchentage*.

Viewed from this angle, of extreme importance is the renewal of the pastoral profession. The evangelical pastor in Germany is beginning to prick up his ears when we keep on saying to him that he is not just an administrator of his office, not just a teacher, but a witness who has the mandate and authority to call men to Christ from the renewed situation of his own personal life. It is in keeping with the magnitude of its task that the German evangelical mission to the people spends a great deal of its time and energy upon pastors and upon the winning of the pastoral profession.

It is so necessary that the pastor train the congregation for its missionary service. There is really no individual witness, but the whole congregation carries the Gospel into the world. Hence evangelism in Germany is greatly concerned for the gathering, deepening, and awakening of the congregation, without which it will not be possible to win and preserve people from the alien masses. Clearly evident conversion to Christ of individual members of the congregation comes first. But the next step is their growing together to become a praying and serving brotherhood. Of great significance for this step are the contemporary movements toward and about the Bible: daily Bible reading, the annual Bible Week, etc.

If the congregation is to undertake responsibility for missions, the missionary co-operation of the layman must receive new light. In many

respects it still appears at this time as though a young evangelical lay movement stood in competition and tension toward pastors. But it is already clear that this idea of competition must be thoroughly surmounted and that there must be a brotherhood in the missionary task in which pastor and layman work together. Here the great church activities render pioneer service and help to produce a new type of genuine lay work. In many places the evangelical youth work has already succeeded in drawing the young congregation together in Word and prayer and in helping it to grow up as an active participant in the service to youth at large. Already evangelical men's work is realizing a type of brotherhood which can appeal to the stranger in ways quite different from the past. Slowly and in a primitive way evangelical people in Germany begin to realize that they perform the greatest service for the evangelizing of the world when they prove themselves to be Christians, in simple living obedience, in the situations into which God has placed them: in marriage and the family, in the calling and labor, in the economy and in politics. When a Christian is sent into the world to be a witness in his position, we do not get results which can be incorporated in statistical reports on evangelism, but we do have the broad foundation without which all evangelism is shadowboxing.

A clear illustration of the present stage of evangelism in Germany is given in the evangelizing of labor. The chasm between labor and church is so wide and deep that it seems hopeless to bridge it. In many individual projects evangelism attempts a bridge by means of meetings, street missions, home visitation, distribution of tracts, and recently in increasing measure through visits in large factories with brief addresses to the workers. Probably more important than these individual efforts at bridge building, however, is the constructing through work among youth and men and women of a brotherhood of Christians into a core about which working people slowly gather and there discover the actuality of the life of Christ.

Evangelism in Germany stands small and weak before the monstrous task ahead. But it is under way, it is moving. It does not want to be the special enterprise of small groups any more, but it would like to be the living conscience of the church and would like to help in a brotherly spirit of service wherever the mission task of the church to the world is being attacked with new earnestness. It would like to be a witness to the sure faith in the promise: "God's Word is not bound."

St. Louis, Mo.

## LITURGY IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN GERMANY

It is now almost six years since a group of German Lutheran liturgical scholars published a highly significant volume of special studies on the rite of the 1948 *Kirchenagende*.\* We review this volume at this late date in spite of the fact that the *Kirchenagende* which evoked the volume has been discarded in favor of the *Agende für evangelisch-lutherische Gemeinden* — of which the first part, Vol. IV, was published in 1952 under the general editorship of Professor Christhard Mahrenholz, so that the latter might become the common service book for all Lutheran parishes of Germany. The very discontinuance of the *Kirchenagende*, by common consent, notwithstanding that it was an excellent service book, prepared by eminent and trustworthy liturgiologists of Germany, should impress on us the significant truth that the Lutheran churches of Germany take liturgical worship seriously. They regard liturgical worship as a normal and healthy type of worship practice, which redounds to the greater glory of God and which edifies God's chosen generation. Experience has taught them that wholesome liturgical worship, based on sound traditions and on an intrinsically good heritage, produces a type of edification which is more enduring than the worship practices of those who ignore and belittle the liturgical heritage of the church and who foster the spirit of secularism and sectarianism rather than a true and vital type of confessionalism and ecumenicity.

In addition to a Foreword and an Appendix, the present volume includes six divisions of from three to nine subdivisions each. The individual chapters were written by authorities in the fields covered. The first part of the book (pp. 9—119) was written by Peter Brunner of the University at Heidelberg, whose theology and liturgiology witness to Lutheran scholarship of a high order. In his very first paragraph Brunner insists that a faithful and true use of the means of grace must accompany a valid order of worship in the worship life of the church. He then goes on to set forth the confessional character of the Lutheran liturgy, contending that the liturgy is an actuality of Christian confessionalism, dogma in prayer and testimony ("*gebetetes und bezeugtes Dogma*") (p. 10). The character of the liturgies of the church is determined by the dogmas of the church. In the history of the Lutheran Church the intimate relationship between liturgy and dogma asserted itself already at the very time when, under Martin Luther, the Lutheran Church was brought into existence as a con-

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\* *Der Gottesdienst an Sonn- und Feiertagen: Untersuchungen zur Kirchenagende I, 1*. By Joachim Beckmann, Hans Kulp, Peter Brunner, Walter Reindell. Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1949. 541 pages. Cloth.

fessional entity, for Luther and his followers lost no time in doing away with the canon minor of the Roman Mass and with private Masses. Pietism, rationalism, and Modernism—all of which have in varying degrees distorted and done violence to Lutheranism and from which the Lutheran Church to this day has not recovered fully—in addition to insisting upon “deeds, not creeds,” sought also to do away with the wholesome liturgies, the Lutheran chorales from the era of orthodoxy, and the great music of the golden age of Lutheran church music (1524—1750), all of which presented Christian and Lutheran dogma faithfully and with due propriety. Brunner stresses (p. 11) that a close relationship exists, too, between Lutheran liturgical practice and the Confessional Writings of our church. His discussion of the Lutheran *Hauptgottesdienst* and of each of its individual parts deserves being read by every Lutheran pastor and theologian. Such reading and study will help to dispel many of the unfortunate attitudes and beliefs which are current in American Lutheranism today, and it will help at the same time to bring about better integration and homogeneity among Lutheran churches and their people. Brunner’s discussion of the Sundays of the church year (pp. 79—109) and of the lectionaries of the church (pp. 113—204) at times goes into great detail and may confuse some who have not studied the church year carefully. His thoughts regarding the Swedish revision of the old standard pericopic system, the so-called “Jerome system,” show that he prefers being cautious to arriving at conclusions prematurely. As is well known, Swedish liturgiologists have made significant changes in their use of the pericopic system. These changes include transferring pericopic lessons to Sundays other than those for which they had been appointed originally. Brunner will not follow the Swedes blindly, but only after their experiments have given ample proof of their validity.

The sung propers of the Lutheran Mass (Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, and Tract) are discussed at length (pp. 207—280) by Joachim Beckmann. He discusses their texts rather than their music and covers each Sunday and feast day of the church year. The German translations are compared with the original Latin texts, and each passage is traced to its Biblical source. Beckmann adds his own remarks and observations only when necessary. In his discussion of the Introit for the Feast of Pentecost he ventures to express the opinion that the antiphon and the Psalm verse are hardly a happy choice. He suggests that a change be made and that Joel 3:1 serve as antiphon and Ps. 110:1 as Psalm verse. The undersigned is inclined to agree with him.

Section five, by Hans L. Kulp, is a discussion of the collects, the proper prefaces, and of the prayer of the post-Communion part of the

liturgy (pp. 283—439). The entire orientation is documented carefully, and the author does not hesitate to speak critically of collects and prayers which are shallow and sentimental (p. 285). The majority of these were written in the romantic 19th century, which still exerts too strong an influence in our day also among Lutherans of America. Hans Kulp is aware of the difficulties which are presented by proper prefaces and avers that we here have no more than a torso of the Eucharistic Prayer (p. 427). He believes we need more prayers of thanksgiving to extol the *magnalia Dei* and is of the opinion that the Eucharistic prayer is needed sorely to gain a full and better understanding of the *verba* and of the Eucharist itself. But, he says, "*ein solches Gebet kann der Gemeinde nur geschenkt werden bei einer grösseren und besseren Erkenntnis des Sakraments selbst*" (p. 427). The Communion liturgy, he says, should be chanted. There is no place in Christian worship where text and music express their interdependence and mutual helpfulness and value better than in the chanting of the Preface of Holy Communion.

Walter Reindell discusses the music of the liturgy in section six (pp. 443—517). He begins by asserting that Christian worship is fundamentally not a spoken, but a sung type of worship. A service that is evangelical in character and expression should be sung to bring out this very fact; we here have the basic reason why the Lutheran Church became "the singing church." She thus distinguished herself from the sects and thus showed that she was truly the church of the *glad* tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Reindell favors the retention of Gregorian plainchant for Lutheran services of worship (p. 443) and rightly insists that good church music does more than beautify a service of worship. Church music bears, interprets, and proclaims the Word and thus serves directly as an agent of the Holy Ghost. Reindell disapproves of the practice of having the pastor speak his parts of the Liturgy while the congregation chants its responses. This is by no means an idiosyncrasy of Mr. Reindell. The same view is shared by most liturgiologists. If a similar procedure were followed in daily life or in the classroom, it would impress us as being very silly. A tragic result of having the pastor speak his parts of the liturgy while the congregation chants its responses may be seen in our own midst, for many today maintain that chanting done by a pastor "is too Roman Catholic." The mistaken notion prevails among some members of the clergy that an opera or concert singer's voice is needed to chant well. Others hold that chanting is effeminate. As a result many have become too timid and self-conscious to chant. It is rarely the human voice that is responsible for poor chanting. Rather it is the ear which

cannot distinguish normally between pitches. The perfection of a concert stage is not needed to make a sung or chanted service of Christian worship effective and beautiful. Reindell recalls to our minds that the propers of the service are to be sung by a choir which has taken the time to rehearse and master them; the fixed parts of the liturgy, the ordinary, are to be sung by the congregation, though occasionally the choir may sing them in more elaborate musical settings. Reindell stresses the importance of conveying the Word to the people through readings from the Holy Scriptures, through the singing of the liturgy, and through the use of church music in general. He decries the carelessness which often accompanies the selection of hymns and points to the fact that the hymns selected too often do not fit at all into the liturgy of the day (p. 463). He calls attention to the fact that the choice of hymns should be determined not by the theme of the sermon, especially if the theme is at variance with the liturgical thought of the day, but by the theme of the liturgy for the day. The theme is frequently given out in the antiphon of the Introit. This position and attitude is thoroughly in keeping with sound liturgical worship traditions of the Lutheran Church. In accordance with this principle, it was common practice in Lutheran churches of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries for cantors, organists, and vergers to select the hymns for the service of worship. Very often they followed lists which had been prepared with care and caution and which related themselves to the liturgy of the Sunday or feast day in question. In this way the choice of hymns was determined not by the pastor or by some other individual who might stress and overuse his own favorite hymns or cater to popular taste, but it was determined rather by the church itself, which, after careful examination, had adopted such lists more or less officially. Reindell calls attention to the beauty and propriety of the liturgical hymns of the Lutheran Church. These, however, should not be sung so often that people will forget or ignore entirely the texts of the liturgy proper, since the texts of the liturgy itself should be so well known to Christian worshipers that they can repeat them from memory. They are treasured elements of our great heritage and should share the endearment which is enjoyed by precious hymn texts and Bible passages. Reindell also discusses the relationship which exists between the *de tempore* (seasonal) hymn and the gradual hymn (*Graduallied*) of the service (p. 467). Many pages (pp. 463—517) are devoted to the problem of the liturgical use of the hymn. We rather missed a well-deserved discussion of the use of Psalms and regret that *Graduallieder* were stressed at the expense of the Graduals themselves. While it is true that Luther was a bit averse to the use of the Gradual in the

service, insisting that it has a tendency to burden the liturgy between the Epistle and the Gospel, it is likewise true that experience has taught us that Luther's criticism does not apply to our use of the liturgy. Our problem with regard to the Gradual is a musical one, but steps are being taken to solve it and to supply our need for better and simple musical settings.

The Appendix (pp. 523—541), by Carl Honemeyer, is devoted to ways and means whereby present-day worship standards might be improved. The author calls urgently for a liturgical renaissance among Lutherans today. This renaissance should make its way not only into orders of worship but also into all activities of the church and into the entire life of the individuals who hold membership in the church. Honemeyer regrets that many members of the clergy believe they have fulfilled their duty when they have introduced liturgical externals. We quote one sentence: "*Erhoffen wir von der liturgischen Erneuerung eine Weckung und Vertiefung echten Lebens in der Gemeinde, so werden wir stets daran denken, dasz Leben immer nur aus Leben entspringt und dasz eine liturgische Erweckung nur durch echte, geistliche Kräfte ausgelöst werden kann*" (p. 524). Three pages are devoted to suggestions setting forth what a pastor might profitably do in order to prepare himself for the conduct of an edifying liturgical service. The following five and one-half pages state what may be done to condition the congregation for worshipful and intelligent participation in liturgical worship. Among other considerations the pastor is urged to meditate on the liturgy of the day in his private study as part of his preparation of and for the service. Desiderata for the church musician might well have been added, since the church musician who has no liturgical sense is the one who is likely to cause most embarrassment. The liturgical renaissance, says Honemeyer, must find its source in the presentation, administration, and use of the means of grace. People must be taught and educated if they are to understand and appreciate liturgical worship. Not only schools and classes but also the sermon can provide such instruction. Honemeyer might have added that a basic knowledge of liturgical worship should be part of the instruction offered to catechumens, who should be informed regarding the distinctive character of the liturgical worship service of the Lutheran Church that they might partake in such worship with understanding, devotion, and appreciation. The Holy Scriptures, says Honemeyer, will serve as the best manual for teaching the need for a distinctive type of Christian worship. The dependence of the liturgy upon the Bible itself will help, he thinks, to impress on people the kerygmatic character of the Lutheran liturgy.

WALTER E. BUSZIN