

Concordia Theological Monthly



S E P T E M B E R ♦ 1 9 5 4



ARCHIVES

THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE PLACE OF THE BIBLE IN EVANGELISM

The British and Foreign Bible Society, the oldest of the many Bible societies, was organized in London, March 7, 1804, and is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. In the current issue of the *Ecumenical Review* (April, 1954, pp. 295 ff.), A. M. Chirgwin reports the results of a study on the place of the Bible in world evangelism. The author points out that all the great evangelists since Chrysostom have used the Bible as their chief tool in the work of evangelization. Today in all parts of the world, from the skidrow of our large cities to the pagan huts in the most benighted countries, the Bible is still the best tool to bring the Gospel to men. Some of the most vigorous congregations in Latin America owe their origin to the lonely colporteur with only a Bible in his hand. The author points out that the study shows that it is frequently the Bible which brings men to faith when the preaching and personal conversation have failed, for the Bible is quick and powerful. Again and again it is a Gospel portion that brings a flash of light to the heathen heart, converts him, and sends him with the Gospel in his hand to tell his family and relatives. It is the Bible which became the means to initiate under God tremendous missionary movements. This efficacy accounts for the fact that Bible societies have a way of transcending all denominational lines and gain support from widely divergent denominational units in their work of spreading the printed Word of God. The author calls attention to the fact that greater efforts must be put forth in spreading the Bible, since at the present rate it would require at least 100 years to get a copy of the Scriptures into every hand. At the present time the Bible is translated into only one half of the languages of the world. At the same time the author urges that all mission societies make a careful study of the most effective method of Bible distribution, in order to carry on the work of world evangelism in the most effective way. F. E. M.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR PREACHERS

Luther stresses the necessity and blessing of *tentatio* (test, trial, temptation, tribulation). He talks about it so often that Karl Holl once hazarded the statement, "In reality, *tentatio* played the same role in Luther's life that visions played in the lives of the mystics." This may not be too happy a comparison. It stresses, however, the importance which Luther attached to *tentatio*. Certainly, no Christian escapes

tentatio. But it appears that in times of great spiritual, national, and economic crises, Christians are more aware of *tentatio* than at other times.

In a lecture which he delivered before a conference of German Evangelical pastors September 15, 1953, Professor Martin Fischer of the Kirchliche Hochschule in West Berlin highlights some of the *tentationes* to which Christian pastors in the Eastern Zone of Germany are subject. The lecture has since been published as a booklet under the title *Die Anfechtung des Predigers heute* (Ludwig Bechauf Verlag, Bielefeld, 1953). From this lecture we are submitting a few choice quotes which we believe to be food for thought.

I have discovered how difficult it is to move preachers to listen. We sometimes speak of this in the Hochschule and have come to the conclusion that perhaps preachers are the ones who find it most difficult to listen.

The real and greatest danger for the Church is to be found in the Church itself. The Antichrist stems from Christendom and not from the world.

The burden of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that it asks us whether we have really preached the Gospel or whether we have secretly taken the road back to the synagogue. The various kinds of pseudo-Lutheranism, false pietism, and neo-Protestant legalism are in reality, and often enough by design, a return to the synagogue.

Some assert that the preacher must make the Word of God live (*aktuell machen*). There can be no doubt that those who assert this are making exorbitant demands on the preacher. Heresies always make exorbitant demands. How can the preacher make the Word of the living God alive? How can we hope for success in our preaching if we regard the Word of the living God to be dead matter which we must through our creative breath make alive? Let us once for all put a stop to this godless speech!

When preaching, the preacher must not deliver an essay. He must not make a school out of the church. He must not make an intellectual assignment out of the message of the Word.

The church is either the place where the preacher preaches about the living God, or it is a center of contagion caused by stagnant waters, spoiled foods, and secularized truth.

When we preach on a text, we are to remember that the canon contains this text because it has discovered the *kerugma* in this text and wants the *kerugma* proclaimed to others.

The sermon is more closely related to exorcism than to a theological essay.

Our mass congregations are evidence of our lack of obedience and penitence. For no one can realize in mass congregations what accord-

ing to Acts 20 is made the bounden duty of pastors and elders and Christian people.

Theological difficulties which cannot be made intelligible in the sermon ought to be re-examined as to their validity.

It is much easier to find the proper words for a theological essay than for a sermon which is intended to penetrate into the hearts and consciences of people.

In *tentationes* faith seeks for the living God, not for the realization of dreams and desires.

Only such preachers as believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead will have the strength and patience confidently to preach in a land like the German Democratic Republic [Eastern Zone] and to be concerned about truth and righteousness. P. M. B.

BULTMANN AND GOLDAMMER

The most important theological concern vexing New Testament students since the close of World War II is the issue which Professor Rudolf Bultmann of the University of Marburg raised in 1941 in an article titled *Neues Testament und Mythologie*. Professor Bultmann's thesis is that the New Testament needs to be "demythologized." He insists, however, with equal determination that the New Testament *kerugma* has not become irrelevant, but that the Church must continue to proclaim it, albeit in existential terms. A vast amount of literature on the subject has appeared in German, English, and other European languages. This journal has repeatedly referred to the issue. Readers are invited to take special note of the German critique translated by Dr. Arndt which appeared in the November, 1953, issue of this periodical.

The discussions devoted to the issue recognize the seriousness of Professor Bultmann's concern. One difficulty has been to agree on the meaning of the term "myth." Professor Bultmann himself has not been consistent in his usage of the term. The need for clarifying this term impressed especially Kurt Goldammer, professor of comparative religion at the University of Marburg. He therefore carefully investigated this term in the light of his knowledge of comparative religion. He published his findings, together with a critique of Professor Bultmann's thesis, in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* (1953, number 12), a leading German theological journal.

Goldammer does not allow, as does Bultmann, for a divorce of *kerugma* from myth. For Goldammer, *kerugma* is included in myth. For Goldammer "myth is, as its Greek name indicates, religious speech, sacred language in which religious experience is concentrated, in which

religious experience speaks to us in its own peculiar language which, indeed, is different from everyday language, which is different also from the language of science and technology. . . . To think in terms of myth, to think mythologically, is a structure of thought which endeavors adequately to comprehend the world of higher values and powers, especially the religious world."

Goldammer inquires, "Why should the New Testament be 'demythologized' in favor of a world view which is in keeping with that commonly held in our day?" He argues that there never has been and that there cannot be a world view which does not contain some mythological elements. "Current interpretations of the nature of the universe are, like our mathematical formulas, in the last analysis no more than ideograms. Our generation regards certain features of the world view commonly accepted only fifty years ago as being mythological. After another fifty years, scientists will charge the present generation for having employed mythological language in describing the nature of the universe. Why, then, should we not continue to hold to the world view of the New Testament whose ideograms are fully adequate for conveying the religious content which we are to know? Why should we attempt constantly to revise or completely change our world view in order to adjust it to a new scientific view regarding the nature of the universe?"

Goldammer also reminds us that our age has preserved mythological features in describing other areas of human experience which no one in his right mind thinks it necessary to "demythologize." He refers to the experience of love. We cannot describe love in logical and rational terms, but are held to speak of it in mythological language. It would be absurd to attempt to "demythologize" *eros* in order to make it logical and existential.

All this does not mean, so Goldammer insists, that theologians must not be mindful of the mythological language employed in the Bible and elsewhere and that they must not strive so to interpret Scripture that modern man will find himself addressed by God in terms of judgment and grace.

Do the "mythological elements" in the New Testament constitute the real offense, the *skandalon*, of Christianity? Goldammer answers this question with a decisive no.

In summing up Goldammer's argument, we cannot improve on the conclusions reached by Montgomery Belgion and published in *Theology* (February). Rev. Belgion writes:

The Gospels cannot be made more attractive and understandable to scientific people through any messing about with their language.

So long as scientific people remain on the scientific plane and within the scientific world of discourse, they can have no inkling of what the Gospels are about. . . . The men who clamor for theology to be put into "another language," who want to reconcile it with the consciences of the mathematically trained, who ask us to accept some fantastic and metaphorical "space" for theology—all such people have never understood what theology says. For otherwise they would know that it refuses to be translated. They are not satisfied when the scientists declare it nonsense; they want it drained of all content of its own and reduced to some fatuous expression of naturalism.

Though Professor Goldammer has honestly squared up to Professor Bultmann's concern, he has hardly spoken the final and decisive word. Before one could make a commitment to Professor Goldammer's solution, one would necessarily have to examine the hermeneutical implications involved in his approach. But this would be a four-dimensional job and cannot be attempted here and now. P. M. B.

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Dr. James B. Conant, United States High Commissioner for Germany, speaking to the Foreign Press Association at Bonn, Germany, said that the stepped-up campaign against the Church in East Germany reflects the unaltered policy of the Soviet Union. "This effort to reduce the Church in the Soviet Zone to a ghettolike existence is not an encouraging sign to those looking for evidence of Communist acts of conciliation. Dozens of church officials, ministers, and priests have been arrested, and some sentenced in show trials to long terms of imprisonment for alleged sabotage of democratic institutions. A horde of police spies has been assigned to attend church services and to report on 'deviations' from the official Communist ideology. In some places youthful Communist rowdies have even been given the task of breaking up religious services."—This is nothing new; it has been reported times without number; but these words are quoted here because they are the testimony, not of pastor or priest (who might be suspected of bias), but of a government official.

Hannover, Germany.—More than a million moviegoers in West Germany so far have seen the American movie "Martin Luther," which was given its European *première* here early in March.

German film authorities said this attendance is twice as large as any commercial film averages during an equivalent period of time.

Washington, D. C.—Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia told a joint session of Congress that the closest tie between his country and the United States is their common Christian faith.

"We read the same Bible: we speak a common spiritual language," the emperor told the House and Senate members. He added:

"We have a profound orientation toward the West. One consideration alone would suffice to explain this fact. The two Americas and the continent of Europe together constitute one third of the world's land surface. In this one third are concentrated the people of the Christian faith.

"With but rare exceptions Christianity does not extend beyond the confines of the Mediterranean. In this remaining two thirds of the earth's surface, Ethiopia is the state having the largest Christian population."

The emperor called Ethiopia "unique among the nations of the world" because "it is today the one remaining Christian state that can trace its history unbroken as a Christian polity from the days of the Roman empire itself."

He said it is "this heritage of ideas and principles" that binds Ethiopia to the United States and the other free nations of the West.

Despite a distance of 8,000 miles, the emperor said, Ethiopia is closely linked with the United States in trade and world politics, and it is a "cultural bridge" between the Christian world and the people of Africa and the Moslem East.

Stockholm.—Sweden's Parliament cannot possibly entertain any proposal concerning the ordination of women as ministers until late next year, despite a reported "desperate" shortage of clergymen in the country, Minister for Church Affairs Ivar Persson said here.

His statement was in reply to a question from the floor by Mrs. Ingrid Andren (Liberal Party) of Vasteras.

"Any such proposal must first be considered by the national convention of the (Swedish State Lutheran) Church, which will meet next in September, 1955," the Minister said. "Until the Church convention has discussed the question, the Riksdag feels itself incompetent to debate the issue."

Los Angeles.—A gift of more than \$1,000,000 made to the Self-Realization Fellowship of All Religions here has revealed J. J. Lynn, Kansas City insurance executive, as "Rajasi Janakananda," for two years head of the cult.

He succeeded the late Paramhansa Yogananda, its Hindu founder, by the wish of the Indian.

The million-dollar gift will be used to spread the teachings of Yogananda throughout the world, a spokesman said.

The huge gift was made by transfer of 22,000 shares of Kansas City Southern Railway common stock, of which Mr. Lynn had been one of the largest holders. He is a director of the railway. He also is president of the U. S. Epperson Underwriting and the Lynn Underwriting companies of Kansas City.

There are now more than 100 Self-Realization Fellowship churches in 14 countries, according to cult officials.

Fulda, Germany.—More than 60,000 persons were present at an open-air Mass in Cathedral Square here, climaxing national observances of the 1,200th anniversary of the death of St. Boniface, Apostle of Germany.

The Mass, celebrated by Archbishop Aloysius J. Muench, Papal Nuncio to Germany, was attended by German and foreign Roman prelates as well as pilgrims from many parts of the world. It was broadcast over all West German radio stations.

During the ceremonies the relics of St. Boniface were carried in a colorful procession. The saint's body is enshrined in the Fulda cathedral.

Los Angeles.—The 95th annual synod of the Augustana Lutheran Church approved a proposal to dissolve the American Lutheran Conference at a final convention to be held in November.

At the same time it put the Church on record again as "willing to discuss the subject of Lutheran unity with any or all Lutheran bodies in America."

The Conference, organized in 1930, is a federation of five Lutheran bodies. In addition to the Augustana Church its members are the American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church.

All but Augustana are currently involved in negotiations for a merger which would create a new Church of some 1,800,000 members. Augustana withdrew from the merger discussions two years ago.

In refusing to enter the American Lutheran Conference merger, Augustana's Commission on Ecumenical Relations stated that this action was necessary because of "the automatic exclusion of other Lutheran bodies" from the discussions and because "the question of ecumenical relations has not been an open item in the agenda" of the Joint Union Committee.

Fergus Falls, Minn.—The Church of the Lutheran Brethren approved expenditures of \$240,000 for the coming year, including support of 50 foreign missionaries, at its 54th annual convention here.

One of the smallest of Lutheran bodies, it ranks near the top

of some 250 Protestant denominations in per-capita giving for missions. One missionary is supported by every 90 persons in the group.

Audubon, Iowa.—A record budget of \$256,660.60 for the next year was approved by the United Evangelical Lutheran Church at its annual meeting here.

The convention also decided to launch a two-year drive for \$350,000 to aid home mission expansion, the Board of Pensions, and Dana College, Blair, Nebr.

Waukegan, Ill.—The Rev. Eino Tuori, pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Detroit, was elected president of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Suomi Synod) at the denomination's 65th annual convention here.

It was the synod's largest convention, with 275 lay and clerical delegates and more than 300 visitors attending.

Minneapolis, Minn.—The Evangelical Lutheran Church has approved an organizational blueprint for merger with three other Lutheran bodies. It is the first of the four to do so.

With an almost unanimous vote delegates to the ELC's biennial convention here adopted resolutions prepared jointly by negotiators of the American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Minneapolis, Minn.—A protest "against the denial of Christian liberty by government and church to the Protestant minority" in Colombia was voted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church at its biennial convention here.

Dr. Rolf A. Syrdal, ELC foreign-mission executive, said the denomination's mission work in Colombia has "entered into new difficulties" by agreements between Colombia and the Vatican.

Minneapolis, Minn.—The Evangelical Lutheran Church voted here to "approve in principle" the establishment of a Lutheran senior liberal arts college in California.

Delegates to the biennial convention instructed the Church's board of Christian education to confer with officers and educators of the denomination and with representatives of other Lutheran synods in California in an effort to find ways and means by which such a college might be established.