

Concordia Theological Monthly



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ARCHIVES

THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The *Anglican Theological Review* (January 1955) offers an editorial on theological education by a prominent Episcopal clergyman which points out the advantages and disadvantages of theological training in his church. It may serve as a mirror reflecting our own standards and needs in ministerial training. The writer thinks that pastoral theology has come into its own and that its clinical training, counseling, group dynamics, and new Christian education are enabling young men to teach with enthusiasm and ideas. The Bible and liturgics are taught more helpfully than a generation ago. The general standard of learning among the clergy has been improved, but one suspects that fewer educated clergy have read and dug into the sources. Relatively few men master Greek and Hebrew and read the Bible and the Fathers with deep understanding. In that the colleges are partly to blame, for they leave the teaching of Greek to the first year of the seminary. Another source of weakness is the assignment of too many term papers and too much secondary reading. Secondary works are usually excellent, but the students do not know Origen, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin firsthand. Certain curricular fads, such as psychology of religion and history of religion, are now passé, but other subjects have taken their place. Both the old and the new ought to be kept, but kept in bounds. On the whole, theological education has become less academic and more religiously warm, since there is greater emphasis on personal devotion. More clergy engage in graduate study, but the seminaries are still unable to provide sufficient pastors for the rapidly growing church.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

SOME NOTES ON CLAUS HARMS

Who of us knows more about Claus Harms than that he published Ninety-five Theses? The *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* of February 1 carries an interesting article by Martin Schmidt on this renowned champion of Lutheranism in the first half of the last century, from which we cull a few particulars.

Claus Harms was born May 25, 1778, in Fahrstedt (located in Holstein). His father being a miller, the boy began learning the same trade. He seems to have been a God-fearing lad. His father died early, and instead of continuing to prepare for the work of a miller he became the hired hand of a farmer. The pastor of the village,

a rationalist, had given instruction to the gifted boy in Latin and Greek, and was disappointed when young Claus, who was eager for a life of immediate usefulness and independence and who dreaded the long years of preparation required in the field of theology (recommended by his tutor), turned to the career of an artisan or a farmer. When about 19 years old, he decided to prepare for the holy ministry after all. The decision, as he frankly and honestly says, was not due to profound religious considerations; he simply resolved to adopt a career which he believed more congenial. Studying at night, he had kept up a budding acquaintance with the classical languages and other learned subjects. When he applied for admission to a Latin school, he was put into Secunda, several years older than his classmates. After one and a half years he enrolled at the University of Kiel, where he pursued theology, not neglecting, however, to make occasional excursions into other fields. Here he read the famous *Reden ueber die Religion* of Schleiermacher, which gripped him on account of their warfare on the old bald rationalism. When he later read Schleiermacher's sermons, he saw to his deep regret that the man whom he considered his hero by no means offered him the pure Gospel of the divine Word. After Schleiermacher's death, it is interesting to note, Claus Harms received the call to become the successor of the renowned theologian as pastor of the *Dreifaltigkeitskirche* in Berlin, a call which he declined, considering it his duty to stay in Kiel, where he had become pastor and afterwards *Propst* (chief pastor). He likewise declined an honoring call to fill the position of Baltic-German Bishop in Petersburg.

After his ordination in 1806 he had soon become known as a preacher of great force and originality who was acquainted with life and made his discourses meaningful. He also had attained the reputation, dubious in many quarters, of being orthodox in the confessional meaning of the word, an enemy of the rationalism which was still rampant. When 1817 came and the tercentenary of the Reformation was to be observed, he conceived the idea of issuing Luther's Ninety-five Theses with ninety-five theses of his own which would tell his generation what it needed to ponder, just as Luther's had met the requirements of 1517. His publication was a manifesto rejecting the religion based on nothing but reason and conscience. It was a clarion call for the return to the message of divine revelation. A few of the theses ought to be quoted. The 75th, looking at the union of the Lutheran and Reformed churches, read: "Considering her a poor maiden, people would like to make the Lutheran Church rich through

an advantageous marriage. By no means perform the ceremony over the remains of Luther. It will make him rise from the grave and then — woe to you!" Thesis 78 had this message: "If at the debate of Marburg, 1529, the body and blood of Christ were given with the bread and wine (*war Christi Leib und Blut im Brot und Wein*), this is true in 1817." The theses of Harms were simple, but they brought out more forcefully than had been ever done before the contrast between the Gospel of the Scriptures and rationalistic shallowness and falsification. A formidable controversy followed their publication. We are told that 200 treatises, either attacking or defending them, appeared. At any rate the old truths were again brought before the public and studied.

Harms was of importance not only as a preacher and pastor and publisher of the theses of 1817, but also as an author. He wrote catechisms for the young, and he addressed the theological students in Kiel in discourses which were published as a book on pastoral theology. He knew how to approach both the learned and the unlearned. His death occurred February 1, 1855. The words of St. Paul in 2 Cor. 10:5 have appropriately been placed under his portrait "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

WILLIAM F. ARNDT

THE CHURCH AND THE CREEDS

The Listener is a weekly published by the British Broadcasting Corporation, London, England, and is well known because of its many thought-provoking articles. In the issue of February 24, 1955, Canon Charles Smyth, rector of St. Margaret's, Westminster, publishes his third installment on the "Case for the Established Church," in particular, on the English union of church and state. The entire article is fraught with worthwhile thoughts, but the paragraph on the church and the state, with proper distinctions, may be applied to churches also outside Anglicanism. The writer says: "When, in the Prayer Book debates of 1928, a member of the House of Commons declared that if our church 'is to be the Church of England, it must teach the faith of the people of England' and must 'bring the doctrines of the Church of England into accord with the doctrine of the people,' the remark was as absurd as the suggestion, which crops up from time to time, that the Church of England should rewrite the Creeds in order to bring them into line with 'modern thought'; for, without going into any awkward questions as to the finality or even the modernity of 'modern thought,' the Creeds of the Universal Church are no more the private property of the

Church of England than the Church of England itself is the private property of the English people. The Church of England does not belong to England: it belongs to God, who in His divine providence uses it to serve His will for the people of England." — The following remark goes far to explain British thinking: "If you happen to attend or to officiate at a christening in the Crypt Chapel of the House of Commons, you will discover that the only form of service provided is the Baptism service from the 1928 Prayer Book, which the House of Commons rejected. . . . No doubt, all this is very illogical and typically English, but it works."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

STEWARDSHIP — ROMAN, CALVINISTIC, LUTHERAN

Under this heading the *Lutheran Quarterly* (February 1955) suggests to Lutherans a restudy of Christian stewardship from the point of view of the Gospel. In view of the Roman doctrine of salvation through works there has been a tendency in Lutheran areas to treat good works as "something extra, beyond the norm." That is the one doctrinal handicap in this matter. The other is the Calvinistic heritage which Lutherans have taken over in pushing the practice of stewardship. In this conception of Christian stewardship God is the Owner of all things, and the believer as God's steward is "under legal contract, subject to legal conditions." But this legalistic conception of stewardship lacks spiritual qualities, such as joy, freedom, and sincerity. Besides, like that of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day, it nurtures hypocrisy. For the stewardship of His followers Jesus demanded a righteousness that exceeds. Christian stewardship in terms of the Gospel is the living of the life of the redeemed with all faithfulness and devotion. It is the use of every gift and talent not for sin, or selfishly for self, but for the service of fellow men and the blessing of the Kingdom. It is free, enthusiastic, generous. To be sure, "we are bought with a price, and we are not our own," even as a child is not its own. Yet since we are redeemed, we do not give to God a small part of what is really His own, keeping the rest for ourselves, but we truly, thankfully, gladly, really give to God what is ours to give as His children. "Thus our whole Christian life is a faithful stewardship in the Gospel, as we live under our Redeemer Christ in his kingdom and serve him." The writer does not condemn the presentation of stewardship duty as something that God wills. But in accord with the essence of Lutheranism he very correctly puts the whole question of stewardship into the Gospel as a fruit of justification.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Jerusalem.—French archaeologist Jean Perrot has discovered at Beersheba in southern Israel the remains of what is believed to be an idolatrous shrine denounced by the Prophet Amos (Amos 5:5), it was announced here by Israeli Department of Antiquities. Diggers working at the site unearthed a large quantity of Iron Age figurines which definitely date the building as of the era of the early Jewish Kingdom, the department said. It added that indications of an even earlier civilization were found under the structure.

Professor Perrot was quoted as saying he is hopeful continued digging may unearth the sanctuary of Abraham, mentioned repeatedly in Genesis, which he believes is at the same site.

Bayreuth, Germany.—Dr. Hermann Dietzfelbinger, 47, director of the Nuremberg Preachers' Seminary, was named new Lutheran Bishop of Bavaria. He succeeds Bishop Hans Meiser of Munich, who retired on May 1. Dr. Dietzfelbinger was elected by the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria at a meeting here. He is vice-president of the synod.

Chicago.—The third assembly of the Lutheran World Federation will be held August 16—25, 1957, at Minneapolis, Minn., it was announced here by the executive committee of the National Lutheran Council. The council had been assigned the task of selecting the assembly city and dates by the executive committee of the Lutheran World Federation when it met at Vienna, Austria, last February. The Council's executive committee held its semiannual meeting here.

Theme for the assembly, selected at the Vienna meeting, will be "Free and One Through Christ Alone."

Some 275 official delegates and 100 official visitors from member as well as 100 from nonmember churches all over the world are expected to attend the Minneapolis assembly. There also will be about 25 official visitors from denominational and interdenominational bodies and representatives from youth groups.

ITEMS FROM NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL NEWS BUREAU

Berlin.—Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hannover was elected chairman of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) at the annual meeting of its synod in Weimar in the Soviet Zone. Bishop Lilje succeeds Bishop Hans Meiser of Munich, 74, who retired May 1 after 22 years as head of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria.

Bishop Meiser has been chairman of VELKD since it was organized on December 31, 1948.

One of Germany's outstanding church leaders, Bishop Lilje is president of the Lutheran World Federation, to which post he was named in 1952; vice-chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKID), a federation of Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches; and a member of the policy-making central committee of the World Council of Churches.

Ten of the thirteen territorial Lutheran churches in Germany are members of VELKD, including the churches of Bavaria, Mecklenburg, Hannover, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Braunschweig, Thuringia, Saxony, Schaumburg-Lippe, and Luebeck. Together they have a membership of nearly 18,000,000.

Geneva, Switzerland.—Lutheran Christians throughout the world number a minimum total of 69,362,978, according to statistics compiled by the Lutheran World Federation at its headquarters here. The figure covers about 120 church and mission groups in nearly 50 countries, it was reported by Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, executive secretary of the federation, who said the estimates were based on the most recent data available in January of this year.

Of the total, he added, 47,864,406 are members of the 56 church bodies in 29 countries that are affiliated with the LWF; 929,724 compose groups in close working relationship with the federation; 5,338,848 belong to other Lutheran churches and groups; and 15,230,000 are members of Union Churches in Germany.

Dr. Lund-Quist stressed that the statistics represent the minimum baptized membership of world Lutheranism. He pointed out that they do not include figures for the Lutheran population in countries where no organized Lutheran Church exists. No attempt was made, he said, to estimate the membership of a number of small Lutheran congregations, such as in Belgium or Mexico, or of the Lutherans in German or Scandinavian congregations in foreign countries. He added also that no information was available on a few Lutheran missions and on Lutheran groups "formerly known to exist in territories with which we are now no longer in communication."

On the basis of the statistics, the LWF estimates that Lutherans constitute nearly three per cent of a world population of 2,499,000,000, about one third of world Protestantism's 207 million, above 18 per

cent of non-Roman Christianity's 379 millions, and about 10 per cent of Christendom's 692,400,000.

Dr. Lund-Quist noted that the membership of the LWF represents nearly 90 per cent of Lutheran Church membership and nearly 70 per cent of world Lutheranism.

More than half the total number of Lutherans are concentrated in Germany, birthplace of the Reformation. Ten member church bodies of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) have a combined membership of 17,795,072, eleven German Union churches have 15,897,000 Lutherans, and six other groups have 3,053,000, making a total of 36,745,072.

Sweden is credited with 7,000,000 Lutherans, the United States and Canada with 6,970,987, Denmark with 4,156,500, Finland with 4,007,920, and Norway with 3,155,232.

Uppsala, Sweden.—An alarming lack of interest in theological studies was highlighted by statistics published here by the University of Uppsala, chief site of ministerial education in Sweden. The university pointed out that in 1931 twelve per cent of the total student body studied theology as compared with only four per cent in 1954. Only 286 young people were enrolled in the theological seminary out of 6,359 students in all schools of Uppsala University.

The apparent lack of interest among Swedish youth for the study of theology is further underlined by the fact that more scholarships have been offered to students of theology than to the students in any other field. "Almost every second theology student is here on a scholarship, while in the other schools the ratio is about 60 to 1," the university reported.

The dearth of students in the divinity school becomes the more alarming when viewed against the general shortage of trained ministers in the Church of Sweden, the university bulletin added. It pointed out that the lack of ministers recently caused the Swedish government to suggest that 200 pastoral posts could be cut from the state church's budget in order to achieve savings. However, if this were done, the size of some Swedish pastorates would increase to the point where some pastors would be in charge of up to 45,000 members. The church has pointed out that the size of a congregation served by one pastor "should never exceed 20,000 members."

"Even this number is much too large, but it is dictated by the shortage of trained ministers," the Church of Sweden declared.