

THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. III.

APRIL, 1923.

No. 4.

The International Scapegoat.

PROF. W. H. T. DAU, St. Louis, Mo.

A view, rare in our bigotry-ridden and fanatical times, is propounded in the *Kristeligt Dagblad* of Kopenhagen (July 27, 1922) regarding the Jews. In an effort to apportion fairly the responsibility for the intolerable state of affairs which is distressing and perplexing the nations of the earth, a writer who signs himself E. C., offers for general consideration the following thoughts:—

Nearly everywhere in the world the bush (Ex. 2, 2) is blazing brightly: the blaze of anti-Semitism, or hatred of the Jews, is spreading and rising in ever higher and wilder flames around the Jewish people. In Germany anti-Semitism is burning everywhere, and the concealed fire blazed forth in the murder of the Jew Rathenau. In Russia the Soviet, spite of its Jewish leaders, has not been able to prevent the medieval pogroms, which during the last year have cost 150,000 Jews their lives, and all Jews and friends of the Jews are trembling with fear at the thought of what is going to happen to the Jewish masses in Russia when finally the Jew Trotzky will be overthrown. For if the slogan in 1905 was: Extinguish the revolution with the blood of the Jews! will the coming slogan not be: Drown Bolshevism in Jewish blood? In free America, where within a generation 2,500,000 Jewish fugitives have been granted asylum, hatred of the Jews is gathering ever-increasing force, just as in all those countries where the Jews are rapidly growing in numbers. It is no better in England. Even here in our home country in the North [Denmark], where Jews are among the most respected citizens, "the mountain-climbers on the Mont Blanc of toleration" are ever becoming fewer. Professor Rozniecki, who died recently, is certainly correct when, in his excellent book *The Jewish Problem*, he writes: "Suppose, now, that Kopenhagen were to shelter as many Jews as Warsaw, — that means in proportion to the number of its in-

A Bit of Recent Swedish Church History.

PROF. W. H. T. DAU, St. Louis, Mo.

43. A DIVISION AMONG THE MISSION-FRIENDS.

It is quite evident that a doctrinal controversy of the dimensions and importance of the one sketched in the foregoing chapters must have its effect and bring about a division not only at the conferences of *Stiftelsen*, but also among the congregations that had joined and were working together with E. F. S. Accordingly, serious frictions occurred here and there throughout Sweden. Unless the helm of the ship was taken from the directors of E. F. S., all signs pointed to a season of sifting for its followers, similar to that which followed upon the Waldenstroem controversy when old friends became forever separated. But it seemed as if the directors of *Stiftelsen* would not or could not see the extent of the danger, and they did nothing to change their course, but instead thereof they cooperated with several of their members in giving the signal for forcing asunder the various groups of mission-friends.

The signal was given, and the first bugle-blast wined in the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Congregation at Stockholm. In this congregation there existed a great opposition. The editor of *Nya Vaktaren*, Axel B. Svensson, had for some years served as the first preacher of this congregation. In the congregation's directorate there sat members both of *Stiftelsen's* and of B. V.'s directorate. Efforts had been made for a long time to induce Svensson either to give up the fight against the Kolmodinian ideas or to resign. But no attempt had been made to state the latter alternative publicly, because no objection could be raised to Svensson's teaching and life, and as a preacher he was well liked. However, by a skilful maneuver his opponents had succeeded already at the annual meeting in 1910 in putting into the directorate of the congregation another *Stiftelsen* man, Director K. J. Ahlberg, who even became the president of the congregation. Although Ahlberg's election to the church council of the congregation certainly had a bearing on the development of matters, still the work of undermining Svensson was chiefly performed by two other members of the directorate. Together with the second preacher of the congregation they were busy bringing into the congregation as members quite a number of persons who were declared followers of the new course of *Stiftelsen*.

However, it was not until January, 1911, that serious complications arose. Through an agitation that had been started ther

had been delivered to the quarterly meeting of the congregation a letter in which the demand was made that Svensson should cease publishing *Nya Vaektaren* and resign as secretary and member of the directorate of B. V. The quarterly meeting under protest of a strong minority passed in a somewhat modified form a resolution in harmony with the above letter, and Svensson was asked to make answer to this resolution of the congregation within two months.

It is plain that Svensson could not, without becoming unfaithful to the truth and to the charge which God had assigned him, comply with this request of the congregation. He returned an elaborate answer to the congregation, in which he gave an account of the origin and import of the Kolmodin controversy, and wound up by putting the question to the congregation whether he should continue the fight against Bible criticism and remain in the directorate of the B. V. of E. F. S. If the congregation refused to grant him these two points, they were asked to regard his letter as a request for his dismissal.

This letter which was given to the members of the congregation in printed form, together with the opinion of the church council, was discussed at the annual meeting on April 10. On the same occasion a document, drawn up by 115 members of the congregation, was presented, in which Svensson was given most extensive testimonials. After a stormy debate lasting several hours the congregation, with a majority of 55 votes, resolved, without answering the question addressed to it by Svensson, to grant him the desired dismissal. But this did not by any means conclude the affair.

44. ORGANIZATION OF THE ROSENIUS CONGREGATION AT STOCKHOLM.

The minority members of the congregation represented its real kernel. They were the support of the congregation and took an active part in its activities. It was easily foreseen that they would not be satisfied with the resolution that had been passed. Under the leadership of business manager S. E. Hemberg, painter A. F. Hallberg, and others, these friends on April 21 organized Rosenius Congregation at Stockholm, promptly secured a place for conducting services, and called Svensson as their preacher.

The outcome of this strife in Stockholm naturally caused a moral effect even in the rural places. On the part of *Stiftelsen* it amounted to a preparatory step for the coming conference, in-

dicating a determination to terrorize the B. V. and vote them down. However, this aim was not achieved without direct opposition, for the determination and energetic action of the friends in Stockholm inspired many who were despondent with new hope.

45. THE CONFERENCE OF 1911.

Meanwhile the conference drew near. It was plain to all that the last and decisive blow was about to be struck. The conference was to render a decision on a resolution embodying an amendment to *Stiftelsen's* constitution. This amendment aimed at excluding the B. V. from E. F. S. The directors supported this resolution. But a number of burning questions arose, the principal one being the withdrawal of Enok Hedberg and in consequence of that the withdrawal of the Director of Missions, Pastor J. Lindgren. On account of these and several other issues the conference of E. F. S. in 1911 was in interested circles looked forward to with equally tense expectation as its last predecessors.

On the day before the conference several of the clerical district representatives held a separate meeting at which a resolution was passed, amongst other things, to secure Pastor Lindgren's restoration and to stick to the resolution of the conference of 1909. Even at this gathering there was dissatisfaction with the directors, who had plainly forfeited to a great extent people's respect and confidence. Nor could the directors go to the meeting of conference with anything like light hearts: In church and secular papers they had been asked to resign, and quite unanimously they had been declared incapable of holding their office. It was plain that, if they wished to retain their office, they must hold themselves ready to make concessions at some points. They had to choose between the B. V. and the declared Kolmodinians. As we shall see, they chose to bow to the latter.

Already when the question of their discharge was up, the directors were fiercely attacked by the friends and supporters of Pastor Lindgren. The fact was now revealed that for several years the financial condition of *Stiftelsen* had become so bad that the society's capital had been diminished by nearly 300,000 kroner. This charge of a default of the most serious nature was not the only one. Especially sharp rejoinders were made when the withdrawal of the Director of Missions came up for debate. The directors had the floor, and according to the unanimous reports of the transactions of the conference in the newspapers they stated as a reason amongst others why Pastor Lindgren had withdrawn, that in *Stiftelsen* there were

men so narrow-minded as to demand that the Bible must be regarded as infallible, and the directors had allowed their regard for these men to dictate several of their resolutions, for instance, the hearing of Enok Hedberg. Although the discussion pointed to a very tense situation, the directors were given their discharge without a vote being taken.

When the discussion was taken up in the afternoon on the amendment to the constitution, Pastor Montelius opened the debate and warmly advocated the change. After a long debate the resolution to amend was adopted, and a clause was added besides, which declared expressly that at future conferences of *Stiftelsen* no director or preacher and no member of B. V. should have a seat or vote.

Two years before the annual conference of E. F. S. had abandoned the first fundamental principle of the Reformation and had expressed its confidence in a position which set up reason as judge over the Bible. Now the conference in cold blood excommunicated a large group of mission-friends for the sole reason that this group would not approve nor cease opposing the unhappy resolution of the year 1909. The conference did not take into consideration that these excommunicated members had — some of them from the very beginning — supported with willing hands the inner and especially the foreign mission of E. F. S. To this mission they had a better right than the loud-talking, tumultuous majority, which had deceitfully changed the old policy of E. F. S. A feeling of belated sorrow was hovering over the conference, while the leading men of B. V. were saying their farewell to an organization which once upon a time had rightly been called *Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen*. The President of *Bibeltrogn Vaenner*, Lambert Jepsson, asked permission, since this was the last time that he took part in a conference of *Stiftelsen*, to speak a few words of farewell. He said that he was a friend of showing one's colors plainly, and this had just been done. The result of the election of directors showed clearly enough the course which E. F. S. was steering. The speaker said that for many years he had loved *Stiftelsen* and worked for it, but now he and all the rest of the *Bibeltrogn Vaenner* had been cast out. To the last he had hoped that *Stiftelsen* would see its error and repent, but no. The error had just been ratified, and the Bible critics were triumphing.

The truth of these words became manifest immediately, for before the close of the conference a resolution was passed by a large

majority to invite Pastor J. Lindgren to withdraw his resignation and remain as director of *Stiftelsen's* foreign mission. As *Nya Vaektaren* put it, "the cap-stone was thus laid for the new building: a *Fosterlands-Stiftelsen* with moderate tendencies toward Bible criticism."

46. AFTER THE CONFERENCE.

The time after the conference within *Stiftelsen* was taken up with negotiations with Pastor Lindgren. From a practical viewpoint, the directors had to surrender their position at nearly every point. The confessional question involved was solved by the directors declaring that they could make no definite statement regarding the inspiration of the Bible, since nothing is found in the confessional writings that comes near expressing the sense of the directors.

The controversy in *Stiftelsen* had thus been practically brought to a conclusion. True, individuals were found and are still found in this society who did not, and still do not, approve the Kolmodinian Bible criticism. But no *real* opposition to modern innovations may be expected from these persons. As a rule, it is these persons who are waiting to do something until it is too late. And the warriors, who are waiting to draw their swords until the entire first army is overthrown and conquered, usually end by becoming lackeys to the enemy.

47. MISSIONSAELSKAPET B. V.

The mission-friends who had been excommunicated by the conference of *Stiftelsen* met Saturday, July 17, for private deliberation. The burning question with them was what they must now do. Through the resolution of *Stiftelsen's* conference it was no longer possible for them to continue as a society *within Stiftelsen*. Either they had to separate and each go his own way, or if they wished to continue their work, it had to be done in a different manner than heretofore. No one entertained any thought of dissolution and separation. They had come together from widely separated parts of the country; most of them had learned to know each other at conferences of *Stiftelsen*, and they had been drawn together more closely during their three years' war in behalf of Holy Scripture. A bond of friendship had thus been formed among them for life that was not to be disrupted like so many similar ties. However, it was not personal friendship only that now held them together, but the love of Christ, which constrains men to engage in mission-work. And so it came to pass that in the afternoon of

June 17, 1911, the *Missionsaelskapet Bibeltrogna Vaenner* (Mission Society of Bible-believing Friends) was organized in the church of the Rosenius Congregation on *Smala graend* (Narrow Street, or Court). However, it was not a new organization that came into existence, but it was the society of *E. F. S.'s Bibeltrogna Vaenner*, which now resolved to expand its membership and work into an independent mission society. Accordingly, the old directors continued in office. But the constitution was subjected to a necessary revision, and district representatives were appointed. As once upon a time *E. F. S.* had been organized in reliance upon God, who also protected them graciously as long as they clung to His Word, so a remnant of the old *Stiftelsen* now united in reliance upon their father's God and the Word of that God.

48. ACTIVITIES OF THE B. V.

It was not long before it was manifest that the Lord remembered especially and cared for the excommunicated, as He has always done. The work grew and gained a great following in the rural districts, so that quite a number of laborers had to be called. Amongst others public school teacher P. Hulthén, who took active part in the fight against Bible criticism, was appointed field secretary. Many mission-congregations severed their connection with *E. F. S.* and joined *B. V.*, and in other places new congregations were organized. This happened, for instance, at Karlskrona, where the *Stiftelsen* people closed their mission-house to the preachers of *B. V.*

While the work thus grew and progressed in the homeland, foreign mission-work was as yet only the subject of prayer. In principle the taking up of mission-work among the heathen had already been resolved upon, but no one had any idea where the field might be located which the Lord would assign to the *B. V.* Moreover, for many, yea, for most of the members of *B. V.* it was impossible to forget their old mission in East Africa, which had become greatly endeared to them. They felt a great yearning for this work when they realized that they could no longer regard the mission in Abyssinia and Gallia, that had been baptized with blood and tears, as their own. They had taken part in the tearful sowing, and now they were not to take part in the joyful reaping.

The directors of *B. V.* were quiet and called upon the Lord to point the way. Considerable thought had been directed to a certain field, but it was shown to be incorrect. Then the Lord's answer came, and He gave more than had been asked. As the *B. V.* had

held fast the old faith in God's Word, the Lord now showed that these friends were to continue their work on their old mission-field in Abyssinia and Gallia. The glad tidings came in the form of a letter from one of the missionaries of E. F. S. in Abyssinia to the President of the B. V. It was Medical Missionary Karl Nystroem in Bellesa, who wrote that he felt that he was so completely one with the B. V. that he would not and could not remain any longer in the service of E. F. S., if the regime which had lately dictated the resolution of excommunication were to be continued. He had no personal complaints to make, but expressed merely the wish that in reliance upon the Lord he might labor on as a "free missionary."

Here was a plain indication from the Lord. None of the members of B. V. had exerted the least influence on Nystroem, and now, as will readily be understood, his letter came as a glad surprise.

Before the directors had come together, another letter arrived from Africa. It came from a native Abyssinian, Pastor Marcus Germei, who had received his training in Sweden and belonged to the E. F. S. mission since 1871. He propounded a twofold question: 1. whether the B. V. intended to take up mission-work in Abyssinia; 2. if so, whether he and his wife might enter the service of the B. V. While Missionary Nystroem had nothing to say about the treatment he had received from E. F. S., Pastor Germei had a long tale of suffering to relate. He had been subjected to manifold chicaneries at the hands of certain of the European missionaries of *Stiftelsen*, for which little or no cause was shown. Moreover, during the course of the year a system of favoritism had developed, of which Pastor Germei now became a victim and was altogether unjustly sentenced to a three months' suspension from his pastoral office. In vain he had laid his case before the directors of E. F. S., who turned a deaf ear to his complaints and confirmed his suspension.

When the directors of B. V. met in September, these two letters, together with the transactions in the case of Pastor Germei, were laid before them. After the director had made certain that no moral charge was lodged against Pastor Germei and that he had upon the whole been entirely innocent during his many sufferings, they resolved to call not only Missionary Nystroem, but also Pastor Germei as missionaries of the B. V. in Abyssinia. Both accepted their call and asked to be discharged from the service of E. F. S.

Thus the Lord had shown that He did not approve of the attempt of the conference of *Stiftelsen* to exclude the B. V. from

participation in the old jointly conducted mission. As they had taken part in the work under difficulties and opposition while the splendid Abyssinian highland was closed to Europeans and Protestant missionaries, the Lord wanted them also to share in the work now that the country was opened up to the Gospel.

49. RETROSPECT.

We have briefly sketched the sorrowful history of a grievous split among Christian confessors. Before we lay aside our pen, it remains to answer a few questions and to take a brief survey of the battle-field, on which so much is lying in dust and debris.

First comes the question: Who must be held responsible for the split? For many this question is difficult to answer, but if we permit God's Word to speak, the answer is easy. God's Word teaches distinctly that those who come forward with new doctrines conflicting with God's Word are causing schisms. Next, those are responsible who favored the spread of the new teaching of Bible criticism; and lastly, all those are responsible too who did not take part in the fight against error, but loved peace more than the truth.

When we look back and seek for the hidden causes of the fall of *Fosterlands-Stiftelsen*, it is plain that it did not first begin in the years 1908 and 1909. Those years, especially the last, when the first fundamental principle of the Reformation was abandoned, only denote the conclusion of a long development. We shall have to look for the roots of this trouble as far back as the Rudin controversy. It is rather a mere accident that Professor Kolmodin was one of Rudin's disciples. Furthermore, we must bear in mind that Kolmodin year after year inculcated his views upon his students at Johannelund, without the mission-friends having any inkling of it. Accordingly, when these views were ready to blossom forth and form fruit, the ground was well prepared for them, and if we look into the matter deeply enough, there is really no reason why we should wonder that things happened as they did happen. After such a beginning it had to come thus. Gradually there had crept into *Stiftelsen* a spirit which caused the directors when calling district representatives, and conference when electing members of the directorate, to have greater regard for a person's name, social standing, and wealth than was fortunate, right, and good. And it is a matter of frequent experience that where human greatness enters in, there the greatness of God passes out, and then a fall must soon occur.

As stated before, the controversy is now practically concluded,

and it ought to furnish reason enough to all concerned for confessing their sins. It happens often that, when men fight for the truth, they lose the quality of peacemakers, which is a distinct mark of the children of God. But it is just as easy, if not easier to run into the danger of losing the truth, if in war times men try to be at peace with all parties. Yes, indeed, there is plenty of reason for confessing our sins.

On both sides a carnal spirit has cropped out on many occasions, and oftentimes judgments have been handed down that were unnecessarily hard. But one need not be astonished at this, for men are a frail generation, and sin is ever besetting them. Thus many tactical mistakes have been made also by the *Bibeltrogn*a, chiefly this one, that they hesitated for a long time to unite in an organization of their own within *Stiftelsen*. As was pointed out before, this should have been done already in the year 1909. The reason why it was not done was, of course, that men had not yet lost all hope that the directors of *Stiftelsen* were able and willing to guide everything to a right conclusion. For this reason all measures which might be interpreted as a direct disapproval of the directors were delayed to the utmost. This shows that it was not lust of power or, as has been said, a desire to obtain a domineering position within E. F. S. that forced the decision. But that can be altered as little as some other things. However, the account is squared somewhat in that there was at last a union of the congenial elements. In many quarters the name of *E. F. S.'s Bibeltrogn Vaenner* has been criticized, but this name was certainly of great importance. Still, we do not see such great importance in the circumstance which was stressed by B. V.'s own men, and that is this, that the name should serve as a marker of a union on the best traditions of old *Stiftelsen*, and as a right to inherit the same. For us the importance of the name lies in the fact that it could bring out, as it did, the true mind of the directors of *Stiftelsen* on the issue of war and peace. When the issue was the authority of the Bible, the directors were not willing to fight, but exhorted, all and sundry, unto peace; but when the issue was the name of E. F. S.'s B. V., those same directors put on their coats of mail and started a long and exhausting campaign against that name, although God's Word, which bids us fight for the Word and for faith, distinctly forbids fighting about words and names.

If we look about us in our beloved fatherland and hear of conditions in the small mission-congregations, we find that a deplorable disintegration is taking place in many localities. In many

places the state of affairs is this, that the mission-friends are in a state of spiritual dependence upon, and in a relation of minors to, their pastors and preachers, of whom many have from conviction embraced the Kolmodinian ideas, while many others, who are economically dependent upon the directors of *Stiftelsen*, are doing the same thing for other reasons. This causes the majority of the mission-friends throughout the country to maintain a crooked attitude towards the mooted question. The reason for this has partly been and still is because the people have no conception of what the issue is about. If this treatise should open the eyes of some, the author would regard that as an abundant reward of his labor.

However, there are wide districts in Sweden in which conditions are entirely different. Entire provinces there are where the importance of the issue is fully perceived, and men have avowedly taken the side of the B. V. It may even be said that in every locality and in every place there are found some who hold fast the old faith and do not follow *Stiftelsen* in its adventurous departures on new and untrodden paths. These friends, who stand alone in their respective places, deserve a special chapter. What this strife has cost them, what anxieties and sufferings they have undergone, nobody understands better than those who have passed through the experience themselves. But neither do the inexperienced know how they have been made aware of the Savior's sweet presence with them, when He has refreshed them with His Word, which abideth forever.

Amid the destruction and carnage on the battle-field let us bend our knees. Let us confess our sins and accept our sentence. But, on the other hand, let us not forget to give thanks. For there are also inducements to gratitude. Chiefly let us thank the Lord because He has graciously kept us from being drawn into error's mazes. Let us also try to get a clear view of the state of affairs that would ensue if there were no one to fight against error. How would things look if the error of Bible criticism were to go uncontradicted and could quietly continue to poison men's minds and souls? What would happen if the *Bibeltrogn Vaenner* were no more? Their organization has without question been of great importance as a preventive. Many errors and many bold utterances against the faith have never come out into the open because the respective parties have been afraid of the opinion which the controversy in *Stiftelsen* has actually shaped throughout Sweden. For all this we must thank the Lord; "for He is good, and His mercy endureth forever."