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“Unless I Am Overcome with Testimonies of Holy Scripture.”

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A number of conflicting interests were represented at the German Diet at Worms which was opened January 28, 1521, and closed May 25, but none could compare, as regards dignity and practical importance, with the two interests which clashed in the great hall of the *Bischofshof* as the sun was setting April 18. The dusk of evening that was dimming the splendor of that gorgeous scene was prophetic of the gloom that was settling on a false principle of authority in religion; the lone figure that stood before the tribunal of earth's mightiest Caesar and calmly voiced his determination not to yield to the order of an autocrat in an affair of conscience, was a flaming torch, typifying the “light at eventide”¹⁾ of which the prophet spoke. The empty seats of Aleander and Caraccioli, the papal nuntii, at that session of the Diet were a practical confession of their inability to match their man-supported claims of power against the God-given power which sustains the confessor of God's Word. Numerically, the odds were against *Luther*; spiritually, *Rome's* case was hopeless. The man with the Bible represents the true majority.

The division between *Luther* and the Curia had been drawn in ever sharper lines since the day when the Wittenberg professor had modestly raised the question: By what right is forgiveness of sin sold? During the forty months, until *Luther* started on his memorable journey to Worms, the question had been debated by the best talent that Rome could oppose to *Luther*; *Luther* had stood his ground against each of them, and as his knowledge of Rome's principle in the argument widened, his conviction that the

1) Zech. 14, 7.

THE THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER.

† Prof. R. D. Biedermann. †

The President of Concordia Theological Seminary at Springfield, Ill., died after a brief illness March 8, and his body was laid to rest at Indianapolis March 13. A funeral service was conducted at the seminary chapel March 10. The Missouri Synod has lost an able officer in Prof. Biedermann.
D.

As Others See Us.

Reviewing Prof. Bente's *American Lutheranism*, the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* (Southern Baptist), in its issue for January, pleads for similar volumes on the history of American Christianity that are to take the place of the American Church History Series of a generation ago. The reviewer (William W. Barnes) regards the two volumes of Prof. Bente's work which have been published so far as "well written and readable and a valuable contribution to the literature of American Christianity." He says, in particular:—

"To a non-Lutheran the introduction in volume I is the most interesting part of the two volumes. The author is certainly a Lutheran, and believes what he professes. In these days of tendency to laxness in belief it is refreshing to come upon one who believes something and knows what he believes. 'The Lutheran Church is the true visible Church of God on earth.' (p. 5.) Other bodies, 'sectarian Churches,' must be invisible churches since the author does not deny them some sort of churchly standing. 'The Lutheran Church is not the universal or only Christian Church.... Nor is it the only saving Church, because there are other Churches preaching Christian truths, which by the grace of God, prove sufficient and powerful to save men.' (pp. 4. 5.) The author does not inform us which of the Lutheran bodies is this 'visible' Church. It seems that some of these bodies hold aloof from one another. The organ of the Augustana Synod, warning against the recent Merger of the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod in the South into the United Lutheran Church, says: 'We must hold ourselves aloof from spiritual fellowship with such churches or denominations, some of whose factors advocate' certain things. (II, p. 3.) The organ of the General Council which went into the Merger says that the attitude of the Augustana Synod toward the Merger 'is as un-American as it is un-Lutheran.' (II, p. 4.) The organ of the Ohio Synod, which also declined to go into the Merger, says: 'Would that Luther could return and with the thunder of his scorn shatter this celebration of his work! Where unionism has its jubilee, all true Lutherans turn away in sorrow and anger.' (II, 4. 5.) One wonders

which one of these seemingly antagonistic bodies is 'the true visible Church of God on earth.'"

The answer to the reviewer's wondering query is in the book he has reviewed. D.

Periergazein.

One form of this evil which the apostle has scored in 2 Thess. 3, 11 and 1 Tim. 5, 13, is exhibited by the *American Lutheran* (March) thus:—

"There is a tendency to judge a congregation's life and efficiency by the number of societies, guilds, sororities, and brotherhoods in its midst. The minister who has been the responsible head or at least the mentor of such a flock of organizations is inclined to be somewhat dubious. He is ready enough to admit the advantages which give these societies excuse for existence. He will not deny that they have certain phases of usefulness. But when he has leisure to weigh the relative value of the time devoted by himself to mere organizational detail and sociability and taken from the multiplicity of his ministerial duties with which he never appears able to catch up, he is apt to become a little depressed. He dare not raise his voice in protest. It is impressed upon him from various sides that modern church-life demands these things, and that the Church must do these things in order to escape fossilization. For this or that purpose, or for no purpose at all, this or that group in the church organizes a new society, the church council sanctions the move, and calmly hands the new burden over to the minister. The church officials take no further interest, unless some irregularity occurs, when they turn to the minister and ask him to give an accounting.... A modern city pastorate is becoming an insane chase, a carefully scheduled routine of meetings. Many of them are necessary. Some of them are not. In regard to any additional budding organization a church ought seriously to consider whether it will add specifically to the efficiency of the congregation. If it will not, then it will injure it in loss of energy, time, and thought that might be utilized otherwise. And it is the already overburdened pastor's energy, time, and thought that will be dissipated. It is like a manufacturing plant installing one new machine after the other and expecting the same old engineer to run them all. It is remarkable how he does keep them all going with so few breakdowns. Here and there one will slow down and perhaps cease functioning altogether, but as a rule the wheels are kept turning, though with what consumption of the engineer's energy and vitality nobody knows but the engineer himself and—the engineer's wife.

"There is a growing activity of laymen in the affairs of the Church, but very few seem inclined to relieve the pastor of the management of the various church societies. It does require special talents, but no doubt the talents are there or can be developed. At any rate modern congregations must make some provision to avoid the flagrant dissipation of pastoral energy. They must bear in mind that conservation of energy is essential to true efficiency." D.

Publicity at Plymouth.

When one remembers the slur on Lutheranism in one of the documents exhibited in Pilgrim Hall at Plymouth, Mass., one reads with extra satisfaction of the work of our congregation at that place to acquaint the little town with the doctrinal position, the aim, and the work of the Lutheran Church, which was accomplished by a week of intensive publicity work. Rev. Prokopy describes this work in the *American Lutheran* (March), and prefaces his account with the following remarks which admit of application outside of Plymouth:—

“We have always believed in dignified, intensive, and extensive church publicity, and have made use of tracts, newspapers, and other means of publicity right along. We have always felt that the Church which teaches and believes that by the grace of God it is the true visible Church has sadly neglected its duty and opportunity. Happily, though sadly, it was awakened to its duty and opportunity by the recent World War. We have thanked God for the difficulties the war has imposed on us, for it makes us work so much the harder to let the people know what we stand for, and the fruits of our efforts are bound to come some time.

“The war hysteria brought many false conceptions and ugly sentiments to the surface, and this heightened our anxiety to devote some specific time to make consistent and well-planned efforts toward making our Church, its doctrine and practise, better known. Not only for the sake of non-Lutherans, however, did we feel that ‘Lutheran Publicity Week’ was a needed thing, but for the sake of our own Lutheran people. They need information about their Church, its doctrine, practise, history. They need an awakening to Lutheran consciousness.”

D.

“Whose Is the Child?” — How Holland Settled the Question.

When the body of Abraham Kuyper was laid to rest in the soil of the Low Countries on November 12, 1920, the last chapter had been written in the career of one of the most remarkable men of our age. “Theologian, statesman, orator, university-founder, preacher, journalist, author, church-reformer, leader, organizer, traveler, all this and more, and preeminent in every capacity, and above all a humble and devout Christian”—is the characterization of this truly great man in an article contributed to the *Princeton Theological Review* for January, 1921.

Kuyper’s life was one of grilling conflicts in behalf of a revival and invigoration of Protestantism in the Netherlands. A consistent Calvinist, he did not shrink from entering the political arena and organizing a Christian political party in order to put through his program of spiritual reform. When he passed away, says the contributor to the *Review*, “the country was covered with Christian primary schools, having splendid buildings and up-to-date equipment, . . . schools in their entire instruction guided by the principles of the Word of God; not merely schools where a portion of the Bible is read and teaching is started with prayer, but schools where the entire instruc-

tion is permeated with the principles of the Calvinistic world- and life-view." The principles on which Kuyper waged his battles for a (state-supported) system of Christian schools are thus set forth:—

"The Liberal party was endeavoring, by suppressing the private schools and forcing the parents to send their children to the godless public schools, to rob the Christian people of their right to give their children a Christian education. This attack on the freedom of conscience was thwarted by Kuyper and the faithful men who supported him. It was the beginning of a long struggle, in which the slogan was, 'A free school and a free church in a free nation'; and the aim was to secure the recognition of the right of parents to decide for themselves along which religious line their children should be educated; and the main contention was that it was nothing short of heathenism to insist that children should be regarded as belonging to the state, and should be educated by the state in the state schools according to principles decided upon by the state. Kuyper maintained that, since the children belong to the parents, and their education is the primary concern of the parents, therefore the school belongs to the parents. This was his strong and logical reasoning, his never-resting '75 mm.' gun in this warfare. State and Church, he admitted, may exercise supervision, to see whether the school comes up to the proper standard, and whether sound religion is taught; but the school is a free institution, the organ of a free society, or of parents united together in such a society. It was in this fight that Kuyper won one of his greatest successes; and at the same time the fight for the free school served as a rallying-point about which he could gather his people when divisions along other lines threatened trouble.

"And what a splendid success he had in this sphere! In the very month in which he died, the country celebrated the complete victory of the free and Christian school. After many a weary conflict and innumerable discussions it has at last gained equal rights with the public school in every respect; even the same financial support from government or municipality. Now even poor parents can without great financial sacrifice send their children to a Christian school and give them the Christian education they desire, an education in harmony with the Word of God, no longer being obliged, as they were before, to send their offspring to schools where the name of Jesus is rigorously excluded."

The notion of a state-supported Christian primary school will never find favor in America, and Lutherans would be least willing to give it countenance. But the basic principle on which Kuyper pivoted his efforts in behalf of primary school education is justified both by reason and Scripture, and is in harmony with every democratic sentiment.

GRAEBNER.

The Children's Sermon.

The paramount issue of a more thorough education of children in religion has led many pastors to make the children's sermon a regular feature of the church preaching-service. On this important

subject the *Biblical Review* (January, 1921) remarks: "Rightly handled, this should be a very real contribution to the Church's care for the spiritual welfare of the child. If it is merely a sort of entertainment feature, thrown in by way of bribing those children who lack parental supervision to remain at least a part of the service, it will not amount to a great deal. But if it be made a simple and attractive, yet serious and dignified presentation of Christian truth, with some passage of Scripture as a text, it may become indispensable. It is not necessary that the preacher play the clown or juggler to keep the attention of the little folks, whose hearts and minds are far more ready to absorb fundamental lessons than their elders often realize. Anecdote and illustration there must be, but the tactful preacher knows how, in such addresses, to maintain an atmosphere suggestive of both reverence and earnestness, instilling in his juvenile audience from Sabbath to Sabbath a sense of the hallowed nature of the place and the occasion. But there may come also an unexpected result, thus referred to by the *Expository Times* in commenting upon a book of texts for children: 'Virginibus Puerisque' has been a feature of the *Expository Times* for some years. No part of the magazine, unless perhaps the Introductory Notes, has been more appreciated. But the demand has been always greater than the supply. For the children's sermon is now almost everywhere a part of the regular service; and it is often the most interesting part. In the Highland parish already referred to there is a succession of great preachers throughout the summer months, and the people have got into the way of comparing one preacher with another; this year we were struck with the fact that it was the children's sermons that were compared and that were most *vividly remembered* (italics our own)." To this may be added the following facts: 1) Children attending parochial schools are usually found to be very willing to attend public worship. 2) Children attending parochial schools are usually found capable of following and understanding the regular sermon preached to the congregation. 3) The tendency of Sunday-school children to leave for home, immediately after the close of Sunday-school, without attending public worship, is due to a defective system of religious education, which because of its superficiality does not inculcate in the heart of the child a proper appreciation of the Word of God. MUELLER.

"Spiritual Reconstruction."

Thus an Eastern weekly terms the following action of the British poet laureate, Robert Bridges. "In November, 1918, Dr. Bridges published a sonnet in the *Times* in which, to use his own analysis, he asserted 1) that ill-treatment of prisoners was a part of the Prussian war policy; 2) that no one in Germany protested against it; 3) that the Germans hoped the English would be provoked into similar barbarities. 'It is plain,' Dr. Bridges now comments (in the *London Chapbook* for January), 'that the second and third charges fall unless the first be true. And it was not true. Yet I believed it, having

been misled, as most of us were, by the newspapers. And that being so, I am not ashamed of retracting my words and expressing sorrow for having written them. And I can see that as I was misled by the English press, so the Germans probably were by their own, and that they have the same excuse for some of their ill-feeling as I have for mine.'” (*The Nation*, March 2.) “*It was not true, yet I believed it*” — what an overwhelming sadness is expressed by these simple words! And how many millions of men echo this pathetic confession to-day! Our informant adds: “Thus the fierce and bloody legends crumble in every land. But we must be on our guard against those whose business and profit lie in rebuilding them.”

D.