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Soederblom and Harnack in a Swedish Estimate.

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During March Prof. Adolph von Harnack, of Berlin, visited the principal ecclesiastical and academic centers of Sweden. His visit attracted a great deal of attention. A conservative paper like *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* celebrated the coming of the distinguished guest with fulsome praise.

The Twelfth General Convention of the Swedish Lutheran State Church had just closed its session when the renowned German Gnostic arrived. There is no apparent connection between the convention and Dr. Harnack's visit, except that both events aroused a great deal of public interest, and both afford glimpses of Swedish church-life under state control.

The convention was attended, not only by representatives from every part of Sweden, but also by invited guests from the adjacent countries to the East, the former provinces of Russia bordering on the Baltic, which had sent their bishops to the convention. *Nya Vaektaren*, for April, calls them the Swedish Archbishop Soederblom's "suffragan bishops." The preparations for the convention had been on a scale to excite great expectations. From a meeting of the leading men of the Swedish state church the public had a right to expect important deliberations bearing on Swedish church-life. In this the confessional Lutherans of Sweden were disappointed. Editor Svensson has called the great doings "a delusion," because "the convention, in fact, was not permitted to take the initiative in any matter or to issue any important declaration on the burning questions of the day." The archbishop, as usual, was charming and impressed the convention with his skill as chairman and general manager. He delivered a remarkably informing address on the state of affairs throughout the world and present-day politics, in which "he sided with both the French and the Germans, the Socialists and the Conservatives." He told

The Value of the Study of Church History.

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Of all the branches taught in the theological curriculum that of church history is by far the most comprehensive. Church history is a trunk with many ramifications. All things which the Church has pressed into its service, all things upon which it has exercised its influence, as well as those things which have interfered with its work, come in for their share of consideration. If the student of church history traverses all the highways and all the byways into which his study will lead him, he will have to be a man of wide reading, who is destined to become not only an all-around theologian, but a man of an all-around education as well. Secular history, exegesis, hermeneutics, dogmatics, the history of dogma, homiletics, isagogics, symbolics, pedagogy, hymnology, literature, art, architecture, music, sociology, economics, philosophy, psychology, even law and medicine, and a general bibliography — all these things will in a smaller or larger degree demand the attention of the student of church history. The study of church history — at first, of course, only in a general outline course — is the best propaedeutic preparation which the student of theology can be given for a stimulating and intelligent pursuance of his theological studies. And a thorough knowledge of church history will be of immense value to the minister of the Gospel for his work both as a teacher and as a pastor.

Christians are not of this world, but they are *in* this world; and in this world they not only come into contact with the world, but their very mission is that in it they be a leaven, a salt, a light. The Christian Church, therefore, has made its history in this world, and it cannot be written entirely apart from the history of the world at large; it is, in fact, the most important part of it. The history of the world can be understood only by him who also knows the history of the Church, and a knowledge of secular history is, on the other hand, indispensable to the student of church history. Only when, for instance, he knows the condition of the world at the time of Christ and the apostles and the early Church, can he better understand the difficulties which the Church in those days had, and better appreciate the victories it has won. Only when he knows that the heathen tolerated various religious systems in the state, provided that none of these claimed to be the true religion, will he understand that the very exclusiveness of the Christian religion brought upon it the enmity of the heathen,

even as to-day this exclusiveness of the Christian religion meets with opposition everywhere. The history of the Church at the time of Constantine and the alliance of the Church and the state in those days cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of the political situation at that time. The entire history of the Middle Ages, from Gregory I to Leo X, is such a closely interwoven combination of secular and ecclesiastical history that one cannot be studied and understood without the other. The history of Gregory VII's policy of world power would lack one of its most important features if the fact of the deepest humiliation of the medieval empire under Henry IV at Canossa were not known to the student. The papal schism was responsible for the disturbance at the University of Prague in 1409 and for the founding of the University of Leipzig; and the history of the University of Leipzig has no beginning if the papal schism be omitted. The story of the life of Zwingli would be incomplete and one of the chief characteristics of his theology and that of the Reformed theology to the present day would be omitted and such theology not fully understood, if it were not known that Zwingli advocated the defense of Christianity by the sword, and that, as a result, he lost his own life in the battle at Kappel, 1531. Nor could we fully understand and appreciate the difficulties which Luther encountered in bringing about the Reformation of the Church if we would eliminate the contemporary political history; in fact, this cannot be done. One cannot write the history of the Church in France and of the Church in England without at the same time writing the political history of those countries. In no country has the Church enjoyed its independence from the State as it has in our own country since the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, and yet some of the Church's difficulties in our own country to-day will not be understood by him who is ignorant — if this were possible — of our own political history.

That, however, which has given to the Church its origin, and which has preserved its life continuously to the present time, is the peculiar doctrine of the Church and the exclusiveness of that doctrine as it is personified in Jesus Christ, who says: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." The Church was born when Jesus said to His disciples: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," Acts 1, 8, and its exclusiveness, and thereby also its

stability, was assured by the infallible divine dictum: "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." John 3, 17. 18. From the time when Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, preached the Gospel and prevailed over those who mockingly said of the apostles, "These men are full of new wine," and from the time when Paul, preaching Jesus and the resurrection, was encountered by certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics, saying, "What will this babbler say?" Acts 17, 17. 18; to the present time, when in spite of the wide-spread apostasy in the very Church itself the old Gospel still holds its own, the history of the Church is the history of its doctrinal conflicts and of its doctrinal triumphs. By these doctrinal controversies God not only tried the faith of His children, but also purified it. The student of church history must, therefore, learn the doctrines of the Church as these have been clearly and accurately defined and set forth by the Church in its creeds as an expression of what it believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the inspired Word in defense against its enemies; and the student of church history must also, for a better understanding of the Church's creeds and of the position which the Church in its conflicts was compelled to take, study the false doctrines by which false prophets have sought to rob the Church of its greatest treasure. When the student of church history has carefully studied these doctrinal controversies in which the Church at all times was engaged, he will at the same time have acquired a knowledge of the essential truths which are systematically presented in dogmatic theology.

A few examples will illustrate. Judaism taught salvation by character and denied the necessity of the grace of God procured by Jesus Christ, the promised Savior, and received by faith. Gnosticism, by combining pagan philosophy of various types and shades with Christian thought, was a crude attempt at substituting a "rational Christianity" for the revealed Christian religion, which, indeed, is not *contra*, but *supra rationem*. Montanism was its other extreme, demanding a rigoristic and ascetic puritanism. Donatism made the validity of a divine ordinance depend upon the character of the administrator. The Arian controversy involved the deity of Christ and the entire conception of God. The Christological controversies (Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism,

or Monophysitism) involved the doctrine of the natures of Christ. The Pelagian controversy discussed original sin and the freedom of the will. The Eucharistic controversy early (831), although not using the term, set forth the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Predestination controversy, started by Gottschalk (847—868), and practically already by Augustine, early taught a double predestination, as Calvin did many years later. The *Filioque* controversy (589) fixed in the Church's creed the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. Scholasticism continued the rationalistic efforts of Gnosticism, but, using the phraseology of the Church in its attempt to justify the existing church doctrines by reason, went about its work in a more clever and subtle way. By quoting the Fathers, Aristotle, and the Bible, it sought to confirm the conclusions which it had reached by deductive logic, dialectics, and speculation. Rationalism of a much later period, higher criticism, and the modern theology of our day are its direct descendants; while a modern dress gives them a different appearance, their likeness is so pronounced that they cannot deny their ancestry. The Reformation clearly taught the authority of the Scriptures and their chief doctrine of justification by faith: *sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fides*, and made all the fundamental doctrines of the Bible stand out anew in their purity. In like manner all the doctrinal controversies, from the earliest history of the Church down to the controversies in which our own Synod has been engaged and the controversies of the Fundamentalists in the sectarian bodies of our day, compel the student to give his attention to the doctrines of the Church and at the same time give him an opportunity to study the history of the Church's dogmas. That an exegetical study of the Scriptures must of necessity be combined with the study of these doctrinal controversies goes without saying.

It will hardly be necessary to show in detail that the many other branches mentioned in an introductory paragraph of this article have not been grafted into the trunk of the Church's history, but have naturally grown from it. When the names of such great preachers as Chrysostom, Bernard of Clairvaux, Luther, Louis Harms, Wesley, Whitefield, Schleiermacher, Walther, and others are mentioned, the student of church history will, even though it be in a passing way, desire to study the sermon work of these men and learn what in the preparation and the delivery of their sermons was peculiar and made those men stand out as great preachers. Early the student of church history will hear of the

basilicas, of the Byzantine cupola style of church architecture (Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople), and later of the Romanesque (Durham cathedral) and the Gothic style (Cologne and Strassburg cathedrals), and will thus learn that the Church has developed its own distinct styles of architecture, and if he be interested, he may thereby be led somewhat to study church architecture in its details. He will also learn that the different styles of church architecture, both as to the exterior and interior of church-buildings, of the Lutheran and the Reformed churches is due to a difference in reformatory principles, expressed, on the one hand, by Luther and, on the other, by the Reformed theologians, which difference has been carried also into the Church's liturgy and, furthermore, finds expression in many usages of the Church. As to music, the student of church history will learn that it has received its greatest development since the Reformation, and that since then the world's best music has been produced on religious themes by such masters as Handel, Bach, Haydn, and Mozart. The education of the young has always played an important part in the propagation of the Gospel-truth, and therefore not only the history of education, but also the principles of teaching, or pedagogy, as developed by great educators in the Church and without, must receive recognition. Nor will it escape the student's attention that the great universities in the world were originally established by the Church. The Good Samaritan being found only where the Church has been established, the student of church history will learn that the eleemosynary institutions throughout the world are a distinct product of Christianity. A worthy place must also be given to such great discoveries and inventions as the invention of the mariners' compass in 1310, the invention of printing by John Gutenberg in 1450, the discovery of America in 1492, and the invention — or shall we say the discovery — of the radiophone of recent date, all of which have contributed largely to the progress of the Gospel. Nor dare the student ignore such discoveries in astronomy (Copernican and Ptolemaic systems), geology, and biology as have brought up new questions to the religious mind. The student of church history will be utterly compelled to study also such hypothetical theories as that of the Darwinian evolution and the theories of such modern philosophers as Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Spencer, all of which have in their own way influenced religious thought and have helped to produce the materialistic, pantheistic, rationalistic, and skeptical age of our day. In short, if one looks

over the index of any large text-book on church history, one will find that one has in his hands a book which is far more comprehensive as to its contents than the name indicates to the average man. He who follows all the clues which the study of church history gives him will acquire a knowledge which is spread over almost the entire field of intellectual activity.

Cicero's opinion as to the value of history as such may well be applied also to the history of the Church: *Testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuncia vetustatis*. Church history, says Ebrard, "is an inexhaustible mine of pastoral wisdom, of sound judgment concerning present happenings, of a good choice of means acceptable to the Lord whereby God's purposes can be accomplished, of an armory filled with spiritual weapons — the sainted confessors calling mightily unto us to examine the condition of our own soul, awakening us from the sleep of a worldly self-satisfaction, inflaming us with their examples of a heroic, constant, and patient faith, confirming us unto faithfulness, and strengthening us unto persistency — an armory not only for the servants of the Word, but also for their congregations, to whom the past can be made fruitful in a large measure in sermons, as also in instructions given to the young."

The value, to the pastor, of the study of church history — and thereby its value also for the student of theology — is discussed at some length by Guth in his *Pastoralspiegel*. He says: "The study of church history puts a check upon the philosophic and mystic speculations which volatilize the very essence of Christianity. . . . The contention that the doctrine of the deity of Christ was not taught by the early Church, but is, moreover, a return to the 'plane of heathen conceptions,' seems to some a plausible statement. Because almost all writings of the apostles are by such people suspected to be spurious, the Scriptural passages teaching the deity of Christ have for them lost their convincing power. Would it not serve to strengthen such disquieted minds if from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers they would learn that the immediate disciples of the apostles, such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Clemens Romanus, called upon the name of Christ and believed in His deity? . . . Would it not strengthen the faith of those in whose mind arises any doubt as to the miracles of the Lord to learn that the oldest Christian apologist, Quadratus, expressly reports that he himself had still seen some of those whom Christ had miraculously healed and who by Him had been raised from the dead?"

“Theologians unto whom the doctrine of the God-man, or the doctrine of a ‘dual existence,’ is a stumbling-block, usually insist that Christology puts itself in direct opposition to education and to culture. This assertion cannot stand in the light of history. Such men as Origen, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Dante, Shakespeare, Pascal, Copernicus, and Newton made valuable contributions to the development of culture, but did their Biblical faith in the deity of Christ conflict with their education, or did education and Christianity in their case constitute two different forms of belief, one of the head and the other of the heart? Does history perhaps teach that Arianism or Socinianism accomplished more than Christianity did for the true development of culture? Does not history prove the very opposite? . . . History teaches that the Church which teaches the Christian religion of the apostles is the greatest power in the world for the development of culture. History teaches that the avenues traversed by the apostles are at the same time the avenues of culture. The power of Christianity can easily be proved by the wonderful transformation which it has brought about in human society.

“Many in our day believe that Biblical Christianity may be dispensed with and be replaced by so-called humanitarian religion. After all, however, history — it is truly a practical philosophy — proves beyond the possibility of contradiction that Christianity alone is the religion of true humanitarianism. . . . Institutions of charity are the product of the Christian religion. Humanitarianism without Christianity lacks its very life-giving root. Auberlen has well said that a humanitarianism devoid of divinity leads to bestiality.

“History also informs us as to the sources and the fruits of irreligion and of unbelief. . . . What was Herod’s argument against the truth proclaimed to him by John, the preacher of repentance? Herod’s argument was Herodias! What reasons prompted Voltaire to oppose the Christian religion so vehemently? His reasons were: mistresses and *auri sacra fames!* He who wallows in the mire of a sinful life cannot long remain neutral towards Christianity. ‘Every one that doeth evil hateth the light.’ John 3, 20. Why do many in our day fall a prey to materialism? Because materialism gives them a dispensation from virtue. Materialism, which loves to put on the beautiful mask of progress, is, in the final analysis, a return to heathenism. . . . Why are the false prophets who deny the existence of God and the immortality of the soul gladly heard by many in our day? Because their

philosophy disturbs one least in the pursuit and enjoyment of the sordid things of this world. We can well understand that people who as *porci de grege Epicuri* are wallowing in the mire of a sinful life will not be enthusiastic over a religion which would make of men athletes of virtue; we can well understand that such people would know nothing of God, because 'the thought of God will arouse in them a terrible neighbor; his name is Judge'; we can well understand that such people desire that 'God above might have died, and that the devil below might be dead.'

"History teaches us that between the human heart and the Scriptures there exists a wonderful relation, that only the supernatural Gospel with its divine wisdom and its divine power can satisfy the deepest needs of the human heart and conscience, that all else cannot satisfy the quest after God found in human nature. To seek satisfaction in the pleasures of this world, in riches and in honor, in art and in science: this is nothing else than trying to fill the Danaidean sieves with water. History furnishes abundant proof for this fact. Louis XV, the notorious king of France, had all that a pleasure-seeking man could desire, but in spite of it all the woman that exercised the greatest influence upon him was compelled to admit that Louis XV was the unhappiest man of France. . . .

"Nor can the hunger of a soul which has been created for God and for eternity be satisfied at the sparkling springs of human arts and sciences. . . . Says Goethe:—

Ach, ich bin des Treibens muede!
Was soll all der Schmerz und Lust?
Suesser Friede,
Komm, ach komm in meine Brust!

Lenau puts it this way:—

Geh hin, du Armer, frag' nach 'Troste
Bei Kunst und Weisheit ueberall,
Trink Wein, geh in den Wald und koste
Die Rose und die Nachtigall:

Sie haben nichts fuer deine Klagen,
Kein Strahl versocht die schwarze Kluft,
Sie haben nichts fuer dein Verzagen,
Und schauernd sinkst du in die Gruft.

"Such admissions, made by eminent men of the world, are, as Tertullian would say, a *testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae*. The same admission was made by Augustine in his *Confessiones*: *Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in Te.*"

From all that has been said it can readily be seen of what immense practical value in many ways a thorough knowledge of church history is to the pastor. A knowledge of the past helps us better to judge the present and to know what we may expect as to the future. The opportunity will not be lacking for the student of church history practically to apply what he has learned. History repeats itself. The modern heresies, *e. g.*, are the old heresies in a new dress, and the student of church history will readily recognize them as such and properly label them. The wonderful things obtained by the prayers of a Monica, an A. H. Francke, a George Mueller, can still be obtained if Christians to-day will have the same faith in the precious promises of God. The utter despair of a Voltaire on his death-bed may still serve as a warning example to all those who, like him, ridicule the idea of an eternal hell, and the cheerful steadfastness with which the early Christians suffered all manner of cruelty and martyrdom may to this day serve to show that death has lost its sting to those who triumph over it by faith in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. When pastors are in quest of illustrations for their sermons and of material for talks and for lectures to be given at the meetings of young people's societies, men's clubs, Sunday-school teachers, or upon other occasions, they might well turn to the rich storehouse of the Church's history and thus also, though it be but in a small measure, acquaint the laity with the precious treasures contained therein, both for their instruction and their profit.

In conclusion one more fact needs to be emphasized. The student of church history ought not to neglect carefully to study the history of the people of God and of mankind in general, as it has been written in the inspired record of the Old Testament Scriptures. Whatever history has been made since does not essentially differ from that of the four thousand years before Christ. A true understanding of that history, together with the beginning of the history of the Christian Church, as recorded in the writings of the New Testament, will enable one to understand and appreciate the wonderful working of God in this world in the interest of His Church and to the glory of His name. "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion! For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord!" Ps. 147, 12. 13. 20.