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## Christmas Greetings

Through this courtesy copy of *The Springfielder*, the twenty-two faculty members and 416 students of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, extend their warm greetings of this blessed season.

May the peace with God through Christ of which the angels sang be yours through the coming year.

### CHORUS APPEARS IN NEW VESTMENTS

Through an "Adopt a Chorister Plan", suggested by alumnus Pastor Walther Eissfeldt, Buckley, Illinois, the sixty-three members of our seminary chorus were able to appear in new tailor-made vestments at their annual Christmas Concerts in Decatur, Lincoln and Springfield.

The chorus wishes to express its gratitude to the many congregations of all sections of the United States and Canada for their gifts for the cassocks and surplices for the chorus.

### WANTED: A NURSE

We sincerely hope that the alumni and friends of our seminary can help us in our search for a nurse who is to work full time in our seminary hospital.

We are looking for a registered nurse who would like to serve her Lord in the Church managing our seminary hospital.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in this position, please write the seminary in care of the Dean of Students.

"The greatest wonder ever on earth is, that the Son of God died the shameful death of the cross."

—Luther.

# CURVE OF CONFIDENCE

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# The Nature of Revelation

Revelation, both as to its reality and as to its nature, is one of the liveliest topics in theology today. It makes no difference whether the theologian be Roman Catholic or Protestant, and, if Protestant, whether he be fundamentalist or modernist or neo-orthodox, he must deal with the reality and nature of revelation.

The works of the neo-orthodox greats, Barth, Brunner, Tillich, in particular, revert again and again to the subject of revelation, to say nothing of the live discussions of this subject by Evangelicals like Carl Henry and Calvinists like Berkouwer. Even a modernistic dogmatic, that of L. Harold De Wolf<sup>1</sup>, devotes no less than a dozen pages in four different places to the subject.

It is not strange that theologians discuss the subject of revelation. As theologians they deal with the question of God, of whom St. John says, "No man hath seen God at any time", 1 Joh. 4, 12, and whom St. Paul describes as "Dwelling in a light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see," 1 Tim. 6, 16. If the theologian is to know anything of God, God must reveal Himself. The only knowledge of either the existence or the character of God which man can have must come by revelation of God Himself.

But while theologians of all shades of theological orientation perforce speak of revelation, there is a wide range of opinion as to what constitutes revelation. At the extreme left are those who acknowledge only the general revelation of God in nature, in history, and in the human conscience. This revelation is called "general," because it is available to all men, pagan as well as Christian. At the other extreme is a theologian like Karl Barth of Basel, who appears to deny any kind of general revelation, even as he appears to deny that there is any true natural knowledge of God, and will acknowledge only the revelation of God in Christ as genuine revelation, worthy of the name.

Those who acknowledge only a general revelation, and deny implicitly and explicitly every form of "special" revelation by miracle, or prophet, or even by Jesus Christ Himself, must logically deny the absoluteness of the Christian religion.

This is the road trod by the advocates of "natural theology" among the scholastics of the Middle Ages; although most of them do not appear to have followed this road to its logical end; this was the road trod by the rationalistic theologians during the age of reason. This is also the road trod by the modernist of today.

Karl Barth, who by virtue of origin and training was of the flesh and bone of the old liberalists, but was shaken out of the sweet dreams concerning the essential goodness of human nature, and the expectation of a soon-to-be-realized man-made kingdom of God by the catastrophe of the First World War with its fearful aftermath of suffering and injustice, rightly rejected, together with other former liberals, the conception of revelation which makes general revelation the sum of all revelation, according to which the prophets of the Old Testament would be, not men who received visual and verbal messages from God, but really just creative thinkers, with Jesus of Nazareth the greatest among them. The dreadful experience of the First World War no longer allowed such comfortable convictions. Turning from them in bitter disillusionment, the shaken ex-liberalist thought it proper to acknowledge only one true revelation, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

T. C. G. Berkouwer, professor of Systematic Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam, says in his excellent book entitled *General Revelation*: "Barth's rejection of natural theology is motivated by his conception of God's revelation in Christ as the *unique* and *exclusive* revelation in the world . . . One must know about Jesus Christ in order to know anything about revelation. . . . Only Jesus Christ can be called revelation in the *true* and *strict* and *original* sense of the word: the Word became flesh. Apart from the incarnation we cannot speak of revelation. According to Barth the words and deeds of Christ, the Virgin birth, and the empty grave, the prophetic and apostolic testimony and the Holy Scriptures are *signs of revelation*. Even the Bible is not itself revelation, but only a sign of revelation."<sup>2</sup>

Barth's early disciples, notably

Emil Brunner, did not wholly follow their teacher in his view of revelation. They developed a view of their own. This is to the effect that revelation deals, not with propositions or doctrine, not even with truths, but that it always and only comes in *events* which must be understood in order to constitute revelation. John Baillie, in the Bampton Lectures in America in 1954, quotes Emil Brunner as follows: "In the time of the Apostles no less than in that of the Old Testament prophets God's revelation was regularly understood as the whole divine action for the salvation of the world, the whole *Heilsgeschichte*, the 'deeds of God' which reveal His nature and will, and above all as He in whom all former revelation finds its true meaning and who is therefore its fulfilment, Jesus Christ. The revelation is neither book nor doctrine, but God Himself in His historical self-attestation. Revelation is event . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Baillie sums up the discussion of revelation as event as opposed to proposition or doctrine with the words: "Our study has thus led us to the conclusion that revelation is always given us through events: yet not through all events, but only through such as appear as God's mighty works; and through no event in its bare character as occurrence, but only as men are enabled by the Spirit of God to apprehend and receive its revelatory power."<sup>4</sup>

The theologian whose whole theology is biblically oriented is both stimulated and saddened by the discussion of Baillie and other neo-orthodox theologians of revelation as event. Certainly, God revealed Himself again and again by means of events. So He revealed Himself when He led Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand, after having afflicted the Egyptians with ten signal plagues. The miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, the feeding of Israel with manna from heaven and with water from a rock, the giving of the Law mid thunder and lightning on Mt. Sinai, and above all things the incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ, His miracles, His death, His resurrection and ascension, the miracle of Pentecost,—these were "wonderful works of

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## Pastor Berner to Deliver Wenchel Lectures



January 29-30, the Rev. Herbert Berner, pastor of Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, will deliver the Wenchel Lectures on Preaching to the faculty and students of the seminary.

Acclaimed as one of the leading pulpiteers in Synod, Pastor Berner brings to this lectureship a rich background of experience in preaching. Before assuming the pastorate of the congregation served for many years by Dr. William Dallman, Pastor Berner served St. John Church, Ireton, Iowa; Peace Lutheran Church, Wall Lake, Iowa; and Concordia, Cincinnati, Ohio.

While in Iowa he served as Stewardship Secretary and District President. In the Central District he was voted First Vice-President.

Formerly a member of Synod's Foreign Mission Board, Pastor Berner is at present a member of Synod's Family Life Committee, the Board of Appeals, and the Synodical Survey Commission.

"It is necessary that the chief article of the Gospel be preserved, to wit, that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ, and not for certain observances or acts of worship devised by men."

—Art. XXVIII, A.C.

## THE NATURE OF REVELATION (Continued from Page 3)

God", in which God revealed Himself. The supreme miracle is the incarnation of the Son of God. "The Word was made flesh, and tented among us." Joh. 1, 14.

However, in the biblical picture of revelation the revelatory event, and the prophet or apostle, to whom God revealed the meaning of the event, belong inseparably together. It may confidently be asserted of all revelatory events what Amos says of the revelatory events in his day, "Surely, the Lord will do nothing, but He revealeth his secrets to His servants, the prophets." Amos 3, 7. When the prophets introduced their thundering messages with "Thus saith the Lord", they were not like Archimedes, who gained insight into a geometrical problem during a bath, and in his joy ran out into the street naked shouting, "Eureka!" They were conscious that, besides having witnessed events, the Lord had spoken to them and had put His words into their mouths. These words, all the claims of neo-orthodox theologians to the contrary notwithstanding, do often come in the form of propositions or doctrines or truths. It is a proposition when Micah says: "He hath showed thee, o man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Micah 6, 8. Many of the teachings of our Lord certainly take the form of propositions. The Sermon on the Mount and the Gospels in general are full of propositions. It is a proposition when the Lord Jesus says, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

How intimately the "mighty acts of God" on the one hand, and apostles and prophets who by the Spirit of God understand and proclaim these mighty acts, belong together if there is to be true revelation becomes clear when St. Paul says, ". . . how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Eph. 3, 5, 6. Mighty acts of God, and holy apostles and prophets, to whom the truth is revealed in order that they may pro-

claim it,—these belong together in Scripture.

And one more thing belongs for us, New Testament Christians who live long after those who received the original revelations, to a sure knowledge of revelation, a Bible that is throughout inspired by that same Spirit, who first interpreted the mighty acts of God to His prophets and apostles. To the thundering "Thus saith the Lord," must come the firm "Thus it is written" of the believer in the revelation that underlies our Christian faith.

Prof. Fred Kramer

<sup>1</sup>John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Living Church*, Harper and Brothers, Publishers.

<sup>2</sup>T. C. G. Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1955, p. 22f.

<sup>3</sup>John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1956, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 78.

## Professor Albrecht Receives Doctorate

Professor Walter A. Albrecht, professor of systematic theology, was awarded the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary at Adelaide, Australia.

It is indeed fitting that this honor has come to Professor Albrecht who for over fifty years has served the church as pastor, professor, and author.

After his graduation from the seminary in St. Louis in 1906, Professor Albrecht served congregations in Didsbury, Alta., Canada; Hubbell, Michigan; Neshkoro, Wisconsin; and Schwano, Wisconsin.

In 1927 Professor Albrecht joined the faculty of our seminary. He lived through the days of the transition from instruction through the medium of the German language to that of English. His crowning literary achievement during his years as professor is the translation of Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, together with the index to the three volume work.

This past summer, Professor and Mrs. Albrecht were privileged to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Their children are Hulda, Walter, Gertrude and Florence.

"Truth is mightier than eloquence; the Spirit stronger than genius; faith greater than learning."

—Luther.