

# Concordia Theological Monthly



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ARCHIVES

# THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

## LUTHER'S PICTURE

### IN MODERN ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

In the *Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung* (October 15, 1954) Dr. Hans Heuer of Nuremberg discusses an article by a Roman Catholic author, Dr. Franz Thoma, in *Religion und Weltanschauung* (March, 1953), a Catholic monthly for religious instruction in advanced schools. The purpose of the essay is to point out how properly to treat the split in the Western church by the Reformation before advanced classes in religion. Dr. Heuer finds much to praise from the Protestant viewpoint in the presentation of the Roman Catholic writer. The article depicts very nicely and correctly the pre-Reformation movements, which took place between 1418 and 1472. It describes also quite accurately the radical differences of opinion that prevailed in the Roman church before Luther's time as the medieval period was drawing to its close. It freely admits the pitiful conditions that prevailed in the church before Luther. He deplores the anti-Semitic outbursts and subsequent attacks upon Jews, instigated by priests. He concedes, too, that there were many things connected with the sale of indulgences which cannot be defended from the viewpoint of theology. He acknowledges that Luther honestly wanted Christ and the Gospel and that he worked and fought for his convictions boldly and bravely. He ascribes to Luther the merit of having created a type of personal Christianity which was valuable both from a religious and a moral viewpoint; and since this was rooted in the Biblical Word of God, it was capable of living and powerful to exert itself in life. Dr. Thoma closes his article with the words: "We therefore acknowledge justly the religious and moral values of the Lutheran personal Christianity, which was both human and natural, and its Biblical source of power as the proper religious value of Protestantism." This, Dr. Heuer thinks, is a far step away from the unjust views of such Romanists as Doellinger, Jansen, Grisar, and Denifle.

Nevertheless, while trying to be fair to Luther and his work, the article shows little appreciation of what Luther accomplished. The Reformation in the writer's opinion was rather a "deformation," since it produced endless theological wrangling, perversion of morals, bloody fanatical civil conflicts, and religious wars. In addition, Dr. Thoma raises the old charges regarding Luther's self-exaltation, his fondness for drink, his inclination to a good, strong lie, and his alleged patholog-

ical and neurotic tendencies. Despite the fact that these charges have been proved unfounded by Heinrich Boehmer and other scholars, they are repeated to show Roman Catholic students who, in Rome's opinion, Luther was and what his Reformation stood for. Therefore the treatment of Luther even by moderate Romanist writers is after all not too just.

J. T. MUELLER

PROFESSOR D. DR. WERNER ELERT, 1885—1954

On November 21 newspapers informed the world that Werner Elert, Lutheran professor *emeritus* of systematic theology at the university of Erlangen, Germany, had died. The news filled the hearts of thousands of his students, friends, and other admirers with grief and sorrow. For everyone who had come directly or indirectly under the influence of this theologian realized that the Lord of the church had called into the eternal rest one of the truly great leaders of Christian thought whose witness to the Gospel of Christ and, in particular, to the blessings of the Lutheran tradition has been of far-reaching consequences.

Readers will not take it amiss if this writer digresses for a moment to relate his contacts with Professor Elert. We met Dr. Elert at the first of three Bad Boll conferences which our Synod initiated in 1948. He was the first of the German theologians present at that conference to read an essay. His topic was the historical and theological implications of the Augsburg Confession. We can best summarize the substance of Professor Elert's essay by quoting from the late Dr. F. E. Mayer's *The Story of Bad Boll* (pp. 15 and 16):

The Erlangen theologian showed that while in the United States the Augsburg Confession is exclusively a *theological* document, in Germany it has also been a *political* document, almost from the beginning, and particularly since the Peace of Augsburg, 1555. Thus there is an entirely different attitude toward the Augsburg Confession among the Lutherans on the two continents. Political expediency compelled the Lutheran princes at Augsburg to set forth in their Confession that they had not deflected from the original Church, for Church and State were viewed as indivisible.

Dr. Elert traced the developments in German history leading to the formation of the European State Church, of which the Augsburg Confession became an indispensable instrument. In America, on the other hand, Church and State are separated, and a confession of faith remains a purely theological document. As a result German and American Lutheran theologians will approach the study of the *Augustana* from different backgrounds and with different interests.

Dr. Elert maintained furthermore that the recent Luther studies, especially those of Karl Holl, have shown that the Lutheran Confessions show a deviation from Luther. German Lutheran scholars therefore are interested more in the study of Luther than of the Confessions. In a meeting of Lutherans from both continents the common ground must first be established. For the American Lutherans the common ground is the Lutheran Confessions; for the German Lutherans the person and writings of Luther; for the Scandinavian Lutherans the ecumenical movement. In the final analysis, however, the common basis must be the Scriptures, and not the Confessions.

We again met Professor Elert at the Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation which convened in Hanover, Germany, July 25 to August 3, 1952. In the course of the discussion on July 29 which followed the reading of essays on the Word and the Sacraments by noted Lutheran theologians, Professor Elert made the following statement which I am herewith transcribing from stenographic notes on the Hanover convention:

The Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper is comprehended in the words employed by Jesus when He instituted His Supper. The church ought never to have written commentaries on Jesus' own words. According to 1 Corinthians 10 fellowship in the body of Christ exists among those who eat of the one loaf. But Holy Communion has to do not only with fellowship in the body of Christ but also with agreement in doctrine. Nothing which is doctrinally divisive may obtain among those who commune. This was also the position of Eusebius, who maintained that fellowship in Holy Communion presupposes unity in doctrine.

On November 7, 1954, we wrote Dr. Elert a letter acknowledging with deep gratitude our obligation for his recent work on Holy Communion and church fellowship in the early church. We quote from this letter:

Sie haben mit dieser Arbeit dem gesamten ökumenischen Denken einen unberechenbaren Dienst getan. An dieser Arbeit wird keiner, dem es ein Ernst ist um das Gesamtwohl der Kirche, vorübergehen dürfen. Die Arbeit, meine ich, ist ein ganz erschütternder Bussruf, wie ihn die Kirche seit langer Zeit, und gerade auch die lutherische Kirche, nicht gehört hat. Wenn überhaupt noch Hoffnung besteht, dass die Lutheraner unter sich und überhaupt die Kirchen, die christliche Kirchen sein wollen, noch einmal zu der Erkenntnis gebracht werden können, was es mit dem Abendmahl auf sich hat und welche Konsequenzen daraus zu ziehen sind, dann kann das, abgesehen von

der Leitung des Geistes durch das lebendige Wort der Schrift, nur noch durch Ihre Abhandlung geschehen.

Nine days later Mrs. Annemarie Elert informed us that her husband had read and thanked us for the letter, but that he was unable to reply since he was about to undergo a serious operation the next day. Perhaps our letter was one of the last American tributes to a great man of God.

In the *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (November 1, 1953) Pastor Max Keller-Hüschemenger pays tribute to Professor Elert on the occasion of the latter's retirement from his teaching duties at Erlangen. Regardless of how posterity will evaluate Professor Elert's interpretation of Lutheran theology and its vast implications for the church at large and for society, no one will hesitate to support Pastor Keller-Hüschemenger's two basic observations. (1) Professor Elert was not a Lutheran in the sense that he aimed to bring about a re-pristination and restoration of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Lutheranism through recourse to the theological formulations of that period. Though Professor Elert attempted to be loyal to the Reformation heritage, he always remained independent in his thought. If his own findings based on thorough historical and Biblical research led him to conclusions other than traditional and current views, he never hesitated for that reason to express them. (2) Professor Elert always remembered that Lutheran theology must be carried on within the only true frame of reference, that is, the church. Therefore he believed it to be his foremost obligation to serve the church and to be most sensitive to its needs, problems, and concerns.

Professor Elert lived out his life away from the noise and distractions of the world. He took his classroom activities most seriously. But the greater part of his life he spent in his private study. There he produced the mighty works of his pen, such as

*Der Kampf um das Christentum. Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen dem evangelischen Christentum und dem allgemeinen Denken seit Schleiermacher und Hegel* (1921).

*Die Lehre des Luthertums im Abriss* (1924 and 1926; translated into Hungarian in 1926 and into English in 1927).

*Morphologie des Luthertums*: two volumes (1931 and 1932; reprint in 1952).

*Der christliche Glaube. Grundlinien der lutherischen Dogmatik* (1940 and 1942).

*Zwischen Gnade und Ungnade. Abwandlungen des Themas Gesetz und Evangelium* (1948).

*Das Christliche Ethos. Grundlinien der lutherischen Ethik* (1949).  
*Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche, hauptsächlich des Ostens* (1954).

In addition, Professor Elert contributed many articles to *Christentum und Wissenschaft*, *Luthertum*, *Theologia Militans*, *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, and to yearbooks, such as *Jahrbuch des Martin Luther-Bundes*. He served on important committees, and at the time of his death was a member of the Theological Commission of the Lutheran World Federation.

Professor Elert was born in 1885 in Heldrungen. He entered the holy ministry in 1912. In 1919 he became director of the Lutheran Seminary in Breslau. Since 1923 he was professor of systematic theology at Erlangen. "He, being dead, yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4).

P. M. B.

#### MARTIN BUBER AT SEVENTY-FIVE

*Religion in Life* (Summer, 1954) offers, under this heading, a brief overview of Buber's life and work as well as an analysis of his significance for present-day religious and philosophical thought. This great Jewish philosopher's work is not appreciated as much in this country as it is in Europe, though from November, 1951, to May, 1952, he visited the United States at the age of seventy-three, "teaching and lecturing throughout the country." The article is written by Dr. Maurice S. Friedman, professor of philosophy and literature at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, N. Y., whose book *Martin Buber: The Philosophy of the "Narrow Ridge"* will be published toward the end of this year by the University of Chicago Press.

The article interested us because during the past summer we had occasion to examine some of Buber's works. Foremost among these are *Between Man and Man*, *The Prophetic Faith*, and *Two Types of Faith*, which, with a number of others, have been translated into English. Buber was born in Vienna in 1878, where until the age of fourteen he was brought up in the home of his grandfather Solomon Buber, one of the last great scholars of the *Haskala*, or the "Jewish enlightenment." He studied at the universities of Vienna and Berlin, and after his graduation from the latter school in 1904 he became a leader of those Zionists who advocated a Jewish cultural renaissance in opposition to purely political Zionism. From 1916 to 1924 he edited *Der Jude*, which he made the leading organ of German-speaking Jewry. From 1926 to 1930 he published, with Joseph Wittig, a Catholic theologian, and Viktor von Weiszaecker, a Protestant doctor and psy-

chotherapist, the widely read periodical *Die Kreatur*, devoted to social and pedagogical problems connected with religion. From 1923 to 1933 Buber taught Jewish philosophy of religion and comparative religion at the University of Frankfurt. From 1938 to 1951 he taught social philosophy at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Though now emeritus, he directs the "Institute for Adult Education," which he founded in 1949 to train teachers who are to help Jewish immigrants in Israel integrate themselves with the established community. In 1953 he was awarded the "Peace Prize" of the German publishers and booksellers, which Albert Schweitzer had received in 1951 and Romano Guardini, a Roman Catholic, in 1952. This award is significant, since Buber led the Jewish people in their battle against Nazism. Despite his age he is still busy with writing, speaking, and teaching, and the third generation, influenced by him, hails him as "the worthiest spiritual representative of Israel" (according to Hermann Hesse, the famous Swiss novelist and poet). With his flowing white beard and penetrating, yet gentle eyes he is said to make a deep impression upon all who listen to his quiet, calm, and convincing voice.

It is not our purpose to characterize Buber's fundamental philosophical principles. That is the task of a philosopher and requires a lengthy article. But a few thoughts, gathered partly from the article of Dr. Friedman and partly from the writer's own study of Buber's books, might interest our readers.

Many years before such existentialist philosophers as Heidegger, Jaspers, Berdyaev, and Sartre, and before such existentialist theologians as Barth, Brunner, Tillich, Karl Heim, Erich Przywara, and Reinhold Niebuhr (to quote only those best known), Buber recognized Kierkegaard's significance for modern philosophical thought and developed a mature existentialism, set forth especially in his book *I and Thou*. God is the "eternal Thou," and man's "I" comes into being as he succeeds in "seeing the other," or also in "experiencing the other side." There is thus in Buber's philosophy a pantheistic undertone similar to that of Spinoza. The "I-Thou" relation includes not only God but also men and even objects of nature, such as animals and trees.

With Franz Rosenzweig, Buber has translated the Hebrew Bible (i. e., the Old Testament) into German, and in his exegetical works he has developed the religious aspects of his existential thought. In fact, it is the Hebrew Bible which serves as the basis of his "I-Thou" speculation. Not monotheism, but the dialog between God and man is the essence of Biblical Judaism. "Christian" existentialists are trying to use Buber's insights and emphases to show that "the uniqueness

of the Christian faith lies in that eternally reciprocal relationship of meeting between man and God and between man and man, which in time is symbolized and manifested by the crucifixion of the Son of God." J. E. Fison, from whose work, *The Blessing of the Holy Spirit*, these words are quoted, writes in the same book: "The Bible is the record and the transcript of actual human contact and encounter with the living God or it is nothing at all. . . . No one in our day has spoken on this issue with such prophetic power as Martin Buber."

There is no doubt that Buber is recalling materialistic Jewry to a new understanding and appreciation of religious fundamentals. His departure from official Rabbinism and his emphasis on Hasidic (pantheistic) thought, which he regards as the real, though subterranean Judaism, has for its objective the "hallowing of the everyday," which is "to bring every area of community life under the kingship of God." "In the work of (social) redemption Israel is called on to play the special part of beginning the kingdom of God through itself becoming a holy people." The Buberian "enlightenment" thus resolves itself into a special form of social gospel (the gospel of a righteous community) conceived from a liberal Hebrew viewpoint, which ultimately has nothing in common with the redemptive message of traditional Christianity. Despite its numerous and often profound religious insights, it cannot be classified as a theology. It is merely a philosophy, that is, man's conception of what God is supposed to be and do and not God's own revealed doctrine and Scripture-fixed declaration of what He is and what He is pleased to do. Apart from certain social fundamentals, those who interpret Buber's philosophy in the sense of Christian theology misinterpret it.

J. T. MUELLER

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

*St. Louis, Mo.* — Lutheran doctors throughout the United States were urged here to offer their services to local pastors "to help adjust domestic problems which may arise in the families of members." The recommendation was made by 35 delegates to the second annual meeting of the Lutheran (Missouri Synod) Medical Mission Association. The delegates represented 5,280 doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, and X-ray and laboratory technicians who are members of eight Association chapters in the U. S.

Delegates also voted to establish scholarships for postgraduate study by medical workers on furlough from mission posts overseas. The aim is to keep the medical missionaries abreast of the latest developments in medicine.



Scholarship aid for students in medical schools will be continued. Association chapters will continue to help find personnel for Missouri Synod medical missions in Africa, India, New Guinea, the Philippines, Japan, Guatemala, and Hong Kong.

Delegates voted to ask the Missouri Synod to set up a board to administer medical mission work under a full-time executive secretary.

*Boulder, Colo.* — University of Colorado regents were asked here to halt the teaching of evolution on penalty of court action against them.

The request was made by the Foundation for the Authenticity of the Bible and for Religious Liberty, Inc., founded here last year by the Rev. Gladden William James of Boulder, a retired missionary. Basic purpose of the organization, Mr. James said, is to fight the theory of evolution, "especially the part that teaches that man is descended from fish or animals." He said membership is still very small, but he hopes to turn it into a national organization.

Mr. James based his objection on the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, calling for separation of church and state. "Colorado University is head over heels in religion," he said. "Teaching that man has an animal ancestry is in direct opposition to the Word of God. We feel that in teaching that, they're teaching religion. We want them to stop it, or else let the Bible into the school to do its own teaching."

"Our organization maintains that the teaching that man has an animal ancestry instead of being created outright by the power of God and in the image of God is an invasion of the principle of separation of Church and State as vouchsafed in the First Amendment."

*New York.* — A total of \$3,554,000 will be sought by the American Bible Society to finance its work next year. Of the total budget, \$2,744,000 is expected from supporting church bodies, individuals, and other sources, while \$800,000 is estimated as income from sales in the United States.

The Society's production schedule next year calls for the publication of 503,000 Bibles, 768,500 Testaments, 40,000 Psalms, 9,626,500 Gospel portions, 1,660,000 illustrated portions, and 1,300,000 copies of the Sermon on the Mount, or a total of 13,898,000. This estimate does not include ABS production overseas.

Projects scheduled for 1955 include \$65,175 to provide paper for the printing of Bibles and Testaments in the East Zone of Germany; \$46,750 for a similar purpose in Japan; \$50,000 for 10,000 hand-wound phonographs and records in three languages of Pakistan; \$5,000 for 40,000 copies of the Sermon on the Mount in four new languages for India; and \$5,900 for 295,000 copies of the Sermon for Indonesia.

*Buenos Aires.*— President Juan D. Peron charged that Roman Catholic priests were allied with the "idle rich" in an attempt to overthrow his regime.

In his strongest speech since he opened his campaign against the church last month, the President made a threat of mass action.

"When the people are ready to go into the street to take measures, I will not only not check them, but I will be with them," he said. "I will lead them."

Gen. Peron spoke before the executive committee of the General Confederation of Labor.

He said Argentina was facing "the fifth effort of the idle rich to overthrow the regime since you workers and I joined forces in 1943. Now they are masquerading as priests."

*Honolulu.*— Growth of the Lutheran churches in Hawaii has led to the organization of a separate Hawaii Conference within the United Lutheran Church in America's Pacific Southwest Synod.

Dr. Carl V. Tambert, Synod president, who recently came here to promote the development of the Church in the Islands, will temporarily remain in charge of the new conference.

Hawaii's Lutherans became affiliated with the U. L. C. A. in 1946, and since then have been part of the Pacific Southwest Synod's Northern Conference, which includes northern California and Nevada.

*Detroit.*— Delegates from eight Lutheran denominations, meeting here, called upon churches to adjust themselves to the requirements of "the new age of mobility." The call was issued at the close of a three-day conference on mobility sponsored by the National Lutheran Council.

The 100 delegates adopted reports suggesting church programs to meet problems arising from the fact that 30 million Americans change their residence each year. Among the steps proposed were:

That congregations undertake intensified instruction stressing Christian stewardship, evangelism, and visitation programs.

That pastors and congregations take advantage of the influx of new people into their areas by a ministry "not only to members but to all people in the community regardless of race or color, social standing, economic circumstance, or even former religious background."

That congregations re-examine their constitutions in order to eliminate provisions that tend to hinder the easy transfer of members.

That all synodical groups discourage so-called "guest or associate membership" in Lutheran churches "because it weakens the church's emphasis on immediate transfer and full membership."

That churches give new members more service by "maintaining

community ideals and values, establishing community recreational facilities, serving as an employment and placement agency, and helping those facing retirement."

The conference noted reports that exaggerated Lutheran loyalty to individual congregations threatens the rapid transfer of people from one congregation to another. Warning against equating "the body of Christ with one's local congregation or one's synodical body," it urged synodical groups to stress that "in loyalty to the local congregation we must always be associated with the larger fellowship."

"As true heirs of the Reformation we ought to be as flexible in organization as the Gospel is changeless in its eternal verities," the conference said.

The delegates recommended that the Lutheran World Federation include in its 1957 Assembly program a study "of the nature and relationship of the individual member to the local congregation, the general church body, and the Lutheran Church as a whole."

The conference expressed special concern over the situation in some rural areas where a number of small congregations belonging to various bodies co-operating in the National Lutheran Council struggle for existence even though they are not able to support full-time pastors. In such situations, the delegates said, "the solution would seem to lie in a merger or in a federated parish."

*London.*—Ruins unearthed near Wooler in Northumberland have been identified as those of a 1,300-year-old palace of King Edwin where in the 7th century St. Paulinus baptized 3,000 people during a 36-day visit.

St. Justus, Archbishop of Canterbury, sent St. Paulinus, later Archbishop of York, to Northumbria with Ethelburga, sister of the King of Kent, when she went there in 625 to marry King Edwin, ruler of the pagan Northumbrians. A condition of the marriage contract was that Christianity would be tolerated in Northumbria. St. Paulinus succeeded not only in converting King Edwin but also large numbers of his subjects and with Edwin's help established his see at York and began building a stone church there.

*Philadelphia.*—There's a parking problem every Wednesday afternoon at Bethel Lutheran Church here—and it is caused by baby carriages, not automobiles.

The lineup is for Bethel's Baby Clinic, a flourishing, much-appreciated community service in the North Philadelphia neighborhood.

The clinic provides free and friendly pediatric service for both the well and the sick child, from infancy to age 12. It represents a partner-

ship between the largest Lutheran congregation in the city and a group of volunteer Jewish physicians.

Through a simple, practical arrangement the church furnishes quarters and several volunteer women workers; a group of doctors give their professional services one afternoon a week; and drug companies contribute nearly all of the needed supplies, amounting to several thousand dollars' worth a year.

More than 1,500 infants and children have been treated at the clinic since its opening. An average of 35 are examined every Wednesday afternoon. About one-half are Negro.

*Minneapolis, Minn.*—Current conflict between President Juan D. Peron of Argentina and some elements in the Roman Catholic Church is not expected to affect the freedom of Protestants to do their work there, according to Dr. B. Foster Stockwell, president of Union Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires.

Dr. Stockwell said the Protestant community is probably growing more rapidly in Latin America than in any other major area of the world.

*Berlin.*—Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin, head of the Evangelical Church in Germany, sent a circular letter to all East German pastors in his diocese instructing them to refuse confirmation to children who had taken part in Communist initiation ceremonies.

The bishop was quickly assailed as a "reactionary" at several meetings held in towns of the Berlin-Brandenburg diocese by FDJ, the Communist youth organization.

Since such meetings are never held without official encouragement, Evangelical officials here fear that further antichurch agitation will result from Communist reaction to the bishop's letter.

Although an uneasy truce has been maintained for almost a year between Evangelical Church officials and East German Communist leaders, a dispute has been developing over Communist indoctrination of school children.

Bishop Dibelius sent his circular letter to counter the Communist indoctrination moves. Besides noting the Marxist initiation ceremonies of East German organizations, he called attention to government plans to give Marxist lectures to students.

"Parents must know," the bishop said, "that professing the Evangelical faith is incompatible with participation in such initiations or lectures and that children practicing or attending them cannot be confirmed by the church."

*Chicago.* — A proposed all-Protestant religious program for the Riverside campus of the University of California was attacked here by the Rev. Dr. Reuben W. Hahn, Executive Secretary of the Student Service Commission of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

He warned that such a program at a state-supported university might make "a diluted type of Protestantism the established religion of the state."

In a statement sent to the Rev. William Graumann, the Lutheran representative on the Riverside campus for "transmission to proper authorities," Dr. Hahn advocated a religious council including Roman Catholic and Jewish representation.

"The universities must recognize Jewish and Catholic religions as well as adherents of Protestantism," the executive of the Lutherans' national campus agency said.

"A vague, all-Protestant amalgamation," he added, is subject to "unionistic practices which are always confessions of weakness with no appeal to group loyalties and which are as anemic in content as they are futile in outcome."

#### NEWS BUREAU OF THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

*Oslo, Norway* (NLC). — The Norwegian Mission Society in Zululand and Natal, South Africa, has decided to relinquish its primary schools to the government, it was announced here.

The society explained the action was made necessary by the government's Bantu Education Acts, withdrawing support from all private schools unless the school itself supplied at least 25 per cent of its maintenance costs.

It added that the act forced most missions either to close their schools or to hand them over to the control of the government and local Bantu community organizations.

"We deeply regret the fact that we have to hand over control of our schools, but as missionaries we cannot close our schools, as we have been called by God to serve Him among the Bantu people, and we must first consider the welfare of these people," the Norwegian society announced. It added: "We know that thousands of Bantu children will have no educational facilities if we close down our schools."