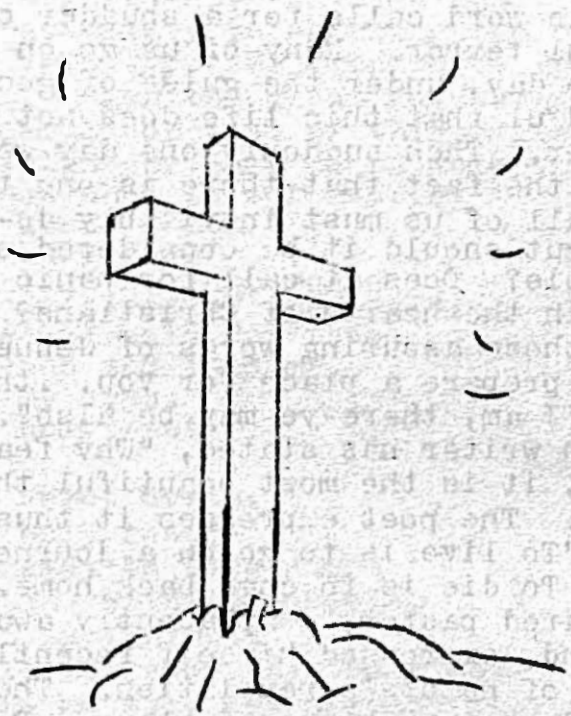


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Komm süsßer Tod

"Come Sweet Death". What a beautiful, yet strikingly simple phrase to attach to death. It is easy to picture the devoted Lutheran composer, Bach, on his deathbed, lifting his head to utter the words of his hopeful invitatory chorale, "Komm süsßer Tod". How restful it must have been for him to ease into that everlasting sleep that enfolded him soon thereafter. Similarly, this phrase could be used to describe the death of Christ on that first Good Friday.

At some time or other during this Lenten season we are all led to reflect on death. To many Christians the mention of this word calls for a shudder of fearful terror. Many of us go on from day to day, under the guise of good health, unmindful that this life does not go on forever. Then suddenly one day we wake up to the fact that there is one thing that all of us must inevitably do---die.

But should it be considered so terrible? Does it call for panic and fear in the hearts of Christians? We have these assuring words of Jesus, "I go to prepare a place for you...that where I am, there ye may be also". A modern writer has stated, "Why fear death, it is the most beautiful thing in life". The poet expresses it thus:

"To live is to go on a journey,
To die is to come back home."

A retired pastor, complacently awaiting the end, expressed himself recently in terms of nature's revelation. The sun goes down in a blaze of glory. Death must be beautiful because everything else created by God is beautiful.

But, there must be a reason for doubt in the minds of some people. How can this be overcome? In the answer lies the entire mission of Christianity. We are to live as in God's presence all the time. We have His gift of salvation, and accordingly, we walk with God in all things, striving to do our best in return for this gift. We learn how to live and not how to die. It is then that our fears are alleviated and rays of hope light the path of uncertainty.

Death is not the end but just the beginning. It is the day to which all Christians can and should look forward. Dr. Ettinger of Muhlenberg College, on the event of his seventy-fifth birthday, expressed the thought, "This is just a College, preparatory to entering the Eternal University". We prepare to meet our creator. When the great day comes, when we breathe our last of this earth's woes and distresses, may we be able to say with assurance in our hearts:

Come, sweet death,
Come, holy rest!
Come, lead me into peace
For I am tired of the world;
O come! I wait for thee,
Come soon and lead me,
Close my eyes.
Come, holy rest!

Come, sweet death,
Come, holy rest!
I am ready to face Jesus
And stand with the angels.
Now it is finished
Now all is ready for the night
Because my eyes are already closed.
Come, holy rest!

INTERDENOMINATIONAL CONFERENCES

Have we a right or a duty to attend interdenominational conferences? This question has presented itself to me as a result of attending three such conferences within the past fifteen months; two under the auspices of the Interseminary Movement, while the third was called by the University Commission of the Church Boards of Education. Certain important points have come to my attention as a consequence of these meetings.

At one of the former conferences the subject of Sunday observance was brought up by a man who had a definite problem in the congregation which he was serving. The crass legalism which made its appearance in his presentation caused me to shudder. If only he had read Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment was my mental comment.

At the conference during Christmas week at Naperville, Ill., the problem of direct social action on the part of Christian students occupied the major part of the plenary sessions. It was generally admitted that the individual student must come into a personal relationship with Jesus. But that was quickly passed over as the conference raised the question of how to meet the social problems which are so well known to all of us. The amazing feature was the direct positive stands which the majority of the students took. They knew where they wanted to go. They had thought the problem through and they felt that they had the Christian way of meeting it.

It has been reported that at the Edinburgh Conference of 1937 Lutherans played an important part, although they were in a minority. The question of the Doctrine of Grace had been presented in a definitely non-Lutheran manner. The Lutherans asked to present their view. Before they were finished all the others realized that this was the view they really held, but had forgotten because other factors had entered into their thought.

These three illustrations will suffice as a background for the conclusions which I wish to draw. It seems to me that the Lutheran position has much to contribute to the theological thinking of America. But it is obvious that Lutheran thinking will not be made well known unless we tell others about what we hold to be true. If we feel that other groups have missed the true meaning of the Gospel, it is our duty to meet with them and, when the time comes to present our view, not hold back, but put forth our thinking so that all may benefit by what we hold to be right. If we wait in complacency for others to state their position and then, as it were, snipe at them from ambush, we are not being honorable to our teachings or to the others. For this reason I think we have a right and a duty to attend and to participate in interdenominational conferences.

The second conclusion is more selfish. Lutheran young people are looking for ways in which to spend their energies working against the forces which are antagonistic to Christianity. They see some church groups are trying to meet the pro-

blems with the cooperation of others. But they look in vain for this attitude on the part of their own church. They would fain work for the Church in meeting the situation, but they are dissuaded by a cold blast which wilts their enthusiasm and their spirit. They grant that the primary object of the Church is to change man's inner life, but they rightly demand that the Church should have an aggressive, forward-looking, positive program which will help them as they try to understand and face the problems of the world in which they live. We can gain something from our contact with other churches in interdenominational meetings toward finding means for helping Lutheran youth satisfy their desire for action. It is not sufficient to be instrumental in awakening and sustaining faith, we must also be instrumental in guiding and directing that faith as it seeks to express itself in meeting the world's difficulties in the spirit of Christ.

Oswald Elbert

THE MEN WHO HAVE INFLUENCED KARL BARTH
(Conclusion)

(Kierkegaard and Dostojewski were discussed in the last issue.)

The next of his radical masters, Barth found in Franz Overbeck, spoken of as the "sceptical" Church Historian of Bale. But was he a sceptic, Barth asks, or was he an enthusiast? At any rate Barth frequently

refers to him. What he admired in him was his "reverence" for truth and his "violent dislike of illusions". (Rom. page 61) It was Overbeck who first seems to have led Barth to a determination to find another basis for faith than history, and to develop the idea of what he calls Urgeschichte, borrowing the word from Overbeck but giving it a theological meaning.

Overbeck puts inexorably before us this dilemma. "If Christianity, then not history. If history, then not Christianity". "The proposal", he says, "to plant Christianity purely on history intimates only the dawn of the time when Christianity will come to an end, and will have to be taken leave of." The one possible place for Christianity, he says, is not in history but in the supertemporal superhistorical-- in Urgeschichte. Overbeck raised disturbing questions in Barth's mind and led him to decisions regarding history and the basis of Christianity for which he has to contend down to the present day. Overbeck, like Dostojewski, has also much to say about "the wisdom of death." Death must have transcendent origin. Does death serve as an "iron broom" to sweep away lies and deceit which burden our earthly life? Then there must be ascribed to it a positive, creative, fruitful meaning. For death creates as well as destroys.

The solemnity of Barth's frequent references to death probably is derived from Overbeck. "The man", he says, "who spoke so feelingly of death must have had a fruitful, living, original idea."

Side by side with the "sceptical" Overbeck, Barth sets among his masters the forward-looking Pastor Blumhardt of

Bad Boll, who sent forth a greeting "to all who are willing to wait for the Kingdom of God," a man whom Barth describes as "a priest-like man", a man who "always went forth from God" to cure the sins and troubles of the world, and who had but one word--"Only Thou, God, canst help, Thou alone", a man who at the same time "waited and hastened" for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The Blumhardts, father and son, are associated with the wonders of driving out spirits, hearing of prayer, the awakening of souls, the note of victory. "Jesus is Conqueror." That Barth's theology has the outspoken character of a "Theology of Hope" he owes in part to Blumhardt.

These were the men who guided Barth in his formative years. We have not heard the last of Karl Barth. His message must be considered because he sees the Church as it actually is to-day. If Barth, or rather, the movement in Barth, succeeds in calling a halt to our anthropocentric theology; if it sets the burning question of the absolute transcendent God again in the center of our thinking; if it restores the category of Revelation to its place of honor; if it calls Christian thought afresh to revere the Word of God; if it puts again upon a fractious, restive generation the claim of the living God for obedience; it will render invaluable service to the Church and to Theology, even if it leave aside other and secondary things.

Walter Bock

TRUE CONFESSION

I did it! And now, when I look back on it, I would not under any circumstances be without the experience. Of course, while I was doing it, I did not particularly relish the job; but, after all, aren't there countless numbers of things in life of which exactly the same thing can be said? The fact of the matter is (and I tell it in the strictest confidence) I harbored a distinct dislike for the job. Had I ghost's chance of getting out of it without tearing my shroud, I confess I would have grabbed it. The whole thing's passed now, so I can confess that my original connection with the agency for which I worked was one of mere chance, and not of my own choice. I had no moral choice in the matter. I was jobless and looking for a job. A refusal to do survey-work would have caused elevated eyebrows. One just dare not be choicy in such times as that.

I took the job. I was to go from house to house in West Philadelphia; ringing doorbells, knocking on doors, shouting to people in third story windows. All this was to the end of inveighing them to tell me their religious affiliations. Pleasant job? No it was not! not by a long shot. Three weeks or so in sultry, summer Philadelphia, and then the word of transfer to New York City. The glamor of the Big City attracted me at once. The job promised to be more difficult there, true; but I had put my hand to the plow, I went.

Forewarnings of a difficult task weren't exaggerated--it was tough! I received

many different sorts of reception, some that aren't even named yet. This stretched over days and weeks until three interminable months had passed. I was often at the nadir of discouragement; I could find no decent excuse to get out of the mess, try as I might. The last straw had come when relief hove into sight at last. It was in the form of an emergency job in the regular routine of the church's work. It was good-bye to canvassing! There is nothing worse than that job.

Although I have presented the black side of the picture, remember this is not the whole picture. The brighter side far overbalances the darker and I'll show you exactly what I mean.

In the first place, I had a fresher desire to be a minister of the Gospel. I frankly admit that the work of the Church wasn't any too attractive up to the very end of my Seminary days. The Church seemed to lack movement and spirit. The Cause of Christ had no more of an attractive picture than a man stagnating in some cross-road, "hick" town. Its work would be a tedious round of baptisms, meetings, marriages, and funerals. I wasn't stimulated by that prospect.

But, when I entered this work, I was overjoyed to find some semblance of life and movement. That was my first and abiding impression of the Board of American Missions. It was a new perspective of the Work of Christ in the world. The representatives of the Board had energy, initiative, and consecration. They also had twentieth-century ways of attacking their problems. They filled me with new hope and courage. You can take it from one who

knows: when you work for this department of the Church, you are a part of the real "sparkplug" of the U.L.C.A.

Canvassing and bell-pushing is a job that is disliked; and it is disliked because it is unpleasant. It is unpleasant because you know that you are taking a big chance of offending the people to whom you address your questions. It is un-Christian to offend, as you have been told. It is also against our better natures. We always aim to please. So, what then?

Would you really like to go through life in the manner of a wet dish-rag? With no backbone at all? It is tiresome bowing and scraping to receive people's thanks and adulation. If you have any backbone, and if you have Christ-likeness in you, you'll go miles to avoid such a spineless existence.

It is true that you offend people when you canvass, but with this big difference: you offend them in the Name of Christ. You will find that those most easily offended are generally farthest from the Church. However, not everyone reacts like that. In the interests of emphasis, you've heard a one-sided story. Let me tell you of some of the other experiences.

In many a house I saw a home; and in many a person I found a soul. Take the case of that poor, inebriate lady in a dingy rooming-house; I talked to her for hours and I thought I couldn't reach first base. But she startled me with a Christmas greeting.

There are also the cases of countless young couples adrift in the world's most

heartless whirlpool. When you come to their squalid rooms, you appear almost as if you were clad in the raiment of some dream-cherished Lohengrin. No, not everyone peers through a crack in the door; many are truly glad to see you. It is these who send you on your way re-assured and confident that you are on the right way.

Be reasonable. Can you blame me for championing such a cause which offers such a grand challenge? Can you blame me for being so enamoured of an agency which so freshened and quickened my desire to sow the Word? If so, whenever you hear about canvassing, surveying, house-to-house, and bell-pushing, don't stick up your nose. Don't regurgitate, but conquer your revulsion, for any such feeling is out-moded. The very words have been unfairly colored. If they do persist in making you feel ill, better consult a physician-- the best one is yourself. Diagnose your case; maybe there's something wrong inside. Perhaps a good stiff dose of this very distasteful medicine of surveying would cleanse you. Try it!

Titus R. Scholl

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Have you any problems upon which you have given thought which you would like to share? Write them up for the Seminarian and thus help others as well as yourself.

ALL ASHORE!

The men who go down to the sea in ships of steel and steam are a hardy lot. In their modern galleons they cross the seven seas with cargoes that would have amazed the Phoenician mariners. In some ways their problems are no different from those facing other generations of men before the mast. No small part of their troubles begin when they step on shore.

"A seaman on shore is an unemployed man; he needs food, a bed and medical attention." In this manner Mr. Proffitt, relief director of the Seaman's Church Institute of Philadelphia, summed up the sailor's troubles and the Institute's work to a small group of us who were visiting there some time ago.

This was, perhaps, the most interesting of our visits to the City's social institutions. From the street we saw a substantial brick building about five stories high. Its triangular shape, like the prow of a ship, faces both Dock and Walnut Streets. Much of the city's merchandise passes through warehouses and markets in the neighborhood.

Once inside the building we saw a group of men playing billiards in a large room that also served as an auditorium. Others were reading the papers or playing cards or checkers. Some were sitting and talking, others just sitting. A man occupying the cashier's wicket at one end of this room directed us to our guide, Mr. Proffitt, whose office is in the "Sick Bay" on the floor above. While we waited

for him to finish a conference with a sailor needing aid, we wandered through the halls of the dormitory. We found that they have separate sections for officers and others for crew members, exactly as on board a ship.

On our inspection of the building we found a carefully worked out program designed to meet every need of the sailor on shore. Most of the men who stay at the Seaman's Church Institute are merely waiting in port between jobs. The rates for beds in the dormitory are a quarter for a night. If a sailor does not have any money but has his shipping papers (the sailor's guarded possession without which he cannot sail) he can get credit and pay it the next time he comes into the Port of Philadelphia. We were told that the sailor respects this trust and pays-up when he returns again. Private rooms and double rooms are a bit higher in price. The furniture in a room consists of a bed, a dresser and a chair. Just enough for a short stay. Every man upon entrance is given a medical examination if there is any doubt about his health.

Beside the recreation room that we had seen on our entrance, there are other rooms used for recreation and instruction. We saw several old sea captains playing cards in the officers' quarters. These quarters open onto the balcony of the auditorium which we entered first. When there is a program in the auditorium the officers occupy the gallery. A fine library on the main floor provides an opportunity to read on many subjects as well as to kill time on fiction.

A School of Navigation is conducted in the building by Naval officers from the New

Customs House across the street. Men ambitious to advance their rating may enroll in the School for a small sum.

The most pleasant surprise was the cozy little Chapel. In back of the altar is a large painting of Christ speaking to the fishermen on the shore. As in a European fishing community, there is a model of a ship hanging on one side of the chancel. It was ninety-one years ago that the first chapel especially for sailors was built on two barges and floated on the Delaware River. The sailors would feel more at home, thought the builders, if their chapel were on the water. From such a background of spiritual ministry to men of the sea the Seaman's Church Institute has grown. It is an interdenominational organization which is non-sectarian in operation. Though it receives aid from the Community Fund, much of the funds for operation come from interested City and State Seamen's Auxiliaries.

When the sailor responds to the command "All ashore" he knows he will find a friend at the Seaman's Church Institute.

John F. Stump

O O O

Saturday Night

Silence fills this lonely night;
The noiseless 'dorm' is like a tomb;
Shrouded at my desk I sit,
While whispered words come into sight.

Time, that ancient heresy,
Begins and ends and leaves undone
Tasks that scattered all about
disturb life's tranquil argosy.

Pause awhile and let them there,
Those oddities of dreary nights;
Pray, and think of Him who asks
In softened tones, "What wilt thou have?"

Strength and wisdom for the fight;
Renew my effort for the work!
Still, and kindly comes His voice,
"No fear, my friend, I am with thee."

Truly they are lying there
Upon my desk in fearful piles,
Tasks that need a stronger hand -
"No fear, my child, I shall be here".

Gone the courage that I had
To do the things I used to do -
Gently then He speaks again,
"No fear, my son, I was with thee".

Comfort then this loneliness,
This brooding on the tasks I have.
Calmly He repeats for me,
"No fear, my son, I'm always here".

Silence fills this lucid night,
The noiseless room is rent with hope,
Strength surges in my shrouded form -
And one by one the tasks are done.

Herbert Hrdlicka

Note: - Presented with acknowledgement
of assistance from individuals of the
seminary.