

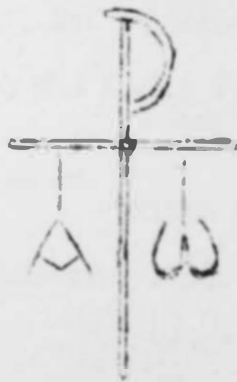
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The Seminarian



The Seminarian



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"Not In Vain, These Years!"

One of the priceless possessions of Lutheranism is Seelsorge. This is the first labor of the pastor. To him has been entrusted the care of souls. His work and activity are to be characterized by what has been called "a passion for souls;" to this end he has been called and trained.

But in the pastor's preparation there are factors which seem to bear little or not at all on this calling to the care of souls. Indeed, there has grown up a very sharp distinction between so-called academic and practical courses. What, if any, is the value for Seelsorge of textual criticism or dogmatic niceties?

Let us examine briefly the nature of Seelsorge. In the first instance it is the preaching of the Word of God to the individual. It is witnessing the Gospel man to man. In this, with propriety and tact, the pastor, the Seelsorger, takes the initiative. The distance between the preacher and the listener created by the chancel and pulpit is removed. The hearer can easily escape the sermon which is preached. But in Seelsorge there is no fleeing and there is no passive listening.

The Word of God is spoken uncompromisingly. There is no need for establishing it. It is integrally connected with the reality of sin. Hans Asmussen writes: "Seelsorge is not an investigation which attempts to establish a judgment of acquitting or binding. The objective and complete condemnation of God is rather the starting point and presupposition of the entire activity of Seelsorge." Here only is it reasonable.

Consequently, Seelsorge is always concerned with the pardoning of the sinner. It treats of God's anger and wrath to ward's sin. It creates a battle between man and God, as it was, in which man attempts either to move himself or God. In the midst of this it brings the reality of the angry God's coming to man in Christ.

Seelsorge, then, treats of the very heart of the Gospel; it treats of reconciliation. It brings the sinner to conversion, which is a real turning from himself to God taking place in actual living. This in brief is the work of Seelsorge.

But what is its relation to academic training? None— if the work of the pastor is mending personal difficulties and ironing out marital problems. None—if the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a social gospel. But Seelsorge is much more than either of these possibilities. It is the active preaching of the Word to the individual sinner to bring him pardon. But academic training seems to be just as unrelated here as in the other place, especially, as one student pointed out, in the case of source analysis. What is the relation?

Let us consider, then, the place of textual criticism for preparation for Seelsorge. Our religion is a prophetic kind. It is a religion of revelation; God speaks, and in speaking he deals with real people. Understanding the human and real nature of Holy Scripture, seeing there the Word of God and its effect on men can give us the background and feeling for our own prophetic work.

It even indicates something of the nature of Seelsorge --the straightforward preaching and witnessing (Verkündigung) of the Word of God: Thus saith the Lord. Source analysis, to name but one factor, assists us to such an appreciation and understanding.

Nor is it simply a romantic idea to say that languages --Hebrew and Greek—are of value. Certainly there can be a good Seelsorger who has never read the Shema in the original, or who cannot translate the Lord's Prayer from the Koine. So also there can be a good teacher of Goethe who has never read German, but how much more "feel" of Goethe he would have by reading the original. The analogy is limited, but to the point.

Likewise, dogmatics with all its fine distinctions and complicated terms is valuable. It forms the groundwork for the activity of Seelsorge. Its terms and niceties may never be used, nevertheless it can direct and provide an understanding of Christianity for the pastor. He must know more than the "Protestant preacher" who has been described as not knowing where he is going, nor how he is to get there, but only that he is on the way!

All these technicalities and minute details—seemingly valueless save to the scholar—help fulfill the task of Seelsorge. Their value may be intangible. They may be of no actual, practical use, that is we may never discuss with a parishioner the significance of the Hebrew verb bara', nor we may never use terms such as hapartiology and exinanition.

Nevertheless, these comprise an integral part of our culture, and make an important contribution to our understanding and leadership. As the Roman Catholic priest must steep himself in the katholischer Geist, so we must develop, in ourselves the spirit of Lutheranism.

The Church is not simply trying to encourage scholarship by insisting upon details of language, criticism, and doctrine for its leaders and pastors. It is requiring those things which it considers essential to the development of Lutheran spirit and culture, so that its ministry might make more effective the work of Seelsorge.

Not in vain, these years!

AUTHORS UNKNOWN

Recently one or two articles were submitted anonymously to the editor of the Seminarian. That they were written and turned in is to be commended. It should be noted, however, that it is the policy of the Seminarian not to publish material presented by an unknown author. These articles have been filed and will appear in the Seminarian only when the writers will make themselves known to the editor.

DOUBLE ISSUE

This issue of the Seminarian includes both the fourth and fifth numbers of volume eleven. The next issue will appear shortly before Easter. The publishing of two issues in one was necessary because examinations, graduation, and other activities of the Seminary made two separate issues impossible.

WANTED:
A MAN WHO REALLY BELIEVES IN GOD

by
W. Douglas Larson

I was once asked by a friend, "Have you ever met a person who really believes in God?"

In the halls of a seminary one expects facetious statements about nearly everything, but my friend was not being facetious. He has enjoyed his work in the church too well to be seriously cynical about its teachings. He meant what he was saying, even if it was something of an insult.

It was an insult, because he was virtually saying, "Are you, Bill and Stanley and Bob, going into a game or a business? Is the ministry a convenient job, or the serious business of testifying to some reality?"

I recovered from my momentary resentment, and managed some kind of defense for the goodwill and integrity behind our choice of the ministry. But he was not talking about sincerity or the good intentions of religious professionals; he was not asking for reasons for believing in God. He was merely asking, "Have you ever met a person in whom the reality of God is unmistakably present?"

The question turns up in other places. In one of his popular books on philosophy Will Durant tells us that after two thousand years Christianity has shown itself to be a beautiful theory but not very practical. Mr. Durant might be a cultured provincial, and yet it is hardly possible that he is unaware of a lot of the rest of life that goes on about him. In all his experience has he never seen a life in which the reality of God was evident?

Not very long ago Dr. Hoh was speaking to a class about first having a "vertical" relationship with God and afterwards working for a "horizontal" relationship with people, when one student whispered to another, "Yes, but it's not very practical." Is there anything more practical than reality? Cannot God be real for people?

The question may be asked in other ways. Is God real for any person you have met?¹

¹We are not discussing here the philosophical question of whether or not God exists, nor are we discussing the theological question of the objective nature of God. We are asking the subjective question whether or not among or over all the various realities in any particu-

I. Other Life Realities and the Reality of God.

Of all that could be real, most people include physical things. At least our American contemporaries and those among whom we are searching for a man to whom God is real, are apt to think that a car, a cement walk, a baby, or what have you, are primary realities. Of these people is there anyone who thinks of God as being just as primary, or who finds in God just as intrusive a reality as a step on which he stumbles or upon which he is supported? Does any American think of God as also real?

Not many people would like to call God material reality. However, there is more to life than only material things. The passing of a train, a basketball throw, an explosion, or in other words, force itself, energy, change, or events, all these are just as real in the lives of most people as material realities. Is there anyone to whom God is just as real as any single event in his life? Is God more real to any G. I. than the fact that he was struggling through a muddy battlefield?

Again, for most people, even for those who have never thought of it before, there is still another kind of reality; ideas. In other words, people soon discover that it is not their own imagination that makes two plus two equal four. It is not hard thinking that makes angles of a triangle equal 180° . These are ideas which are real whether or not it occurs to anyone to think about them. Now, is God more real to anyone than the affairs of life as ideas and principles, engineering rules or ethical ideals?

Many kinds of reality sometimes come together. Human experiences, emotions, intentions, intuitions, loyalties, the joy of love, the misery of envy, unconscious liberality--all these seem to be tangled up with plain chemical matter, with all kinds of events and changes, and with some, if only vague, ideas. Is God so truly a part of any man's life as any one of these complex realities? Is God even so real as human beings, as a friend, or as a bare acquaintance?

God, it is true, may be a different kind of reality. Niebuhr makes the questionable statement that He becomes for an individual not so much a single experience as the overtone of all experiences. If so, do you know anyone for whom that "overtone" is as real as the experiences themselves?

If God is a spirit, it is conceivable that He should work in a life in ways past our finding out. Nevertheless His work will have effect and His presence will crowd the other realities in any life. He may not make Himself known in a vision or reveal Himself in some fulgurous idea, but He will make a difference.

lar man's life the reality of God is present. Is God real to him?

For those interested in the ways of reason, the question within philosophy is epistemological; within theology it relates partly to the revelation of God the Creator, and partly to the appropriation of the work of Christ by the believer.

Of course, one may be indifferent to some realities or one may be affected by them only in a general manner. The fact that a real bomb hit a building in London may in a very general way affect everyone, although most people are not conscious of it. For the man who was close by when the bomb hit, that became an inescapable personal reality. Now Christians are those who claim that although there is a God Who is affecting everyone in a kind of general way, He is a reality who has entered their individual lives, also.

Reality as we have been describing it needs not be clear or easily put into concepts. However, the various levels of reality do have some common aspects. All are coercive. You cannot walk through a solid wall; you have to walk around it. You cannot get a three gallon pail full with only two gallons of water. The idea, one plus one equal two, not in your mind but just as it is, forces you to use another gallon to get your pail full.

For a Christian who claims that God has entered his life, God should be just as coercive. In other words, reality must be taken into account. A realist, therefore, is one who takes into account things just as they are. Who is this man who takes into account God in the same way as material reality? Who is this man who would find himself in a dream-world, closing his eyes to evident reality as he knows it, if he were to abandon God? Who is this man who knows that hard-headed realism depends first on God?

Reality, therefore, is intrusive. It is more; it is absolutely necessary. A man walks down some steps to get out of his house. It is not necessary that he think about them nor is it essential that he use them, but when using them, avoiding them, or even replacing them, he is dealing with a fact that is necessary to that dealing. They are real for him. In what man is the reality of God so intrusive, so inescapable that whether he tries to use God, to avoid Him, or to replace Him, God still seems to be there?

II. Simulations of the Reality of God.

Makers of idols are all inane, and their adored images are futile; an idol's devotees are blind and dull, their end is shame. Who would ever carve a god or cast an idol?--mere futilities! The spells put on it make a sorry show, and its magic charms are only homemade; let its adherents gather, let them come forward, and they will be put to terror and shame together.

The blacksmith works with coals and hammers the idol into shape, flaying his brawny arms, losing strength as he grows hungry and weary for a drink of water. The worker in wood draws lines on the block, marking them with a pencil; then he shapes the idol with his plane into a human figure, comely as a man, to occupy a shrine.

In cutting timber for this purpose a man will fix upon some plane-tree or oak, which God planted and the rain nourished to serve as fuel; men kindle a fire with it to warm themselves, or start a blaze in

order to bake bread. But he turns it into a god for worship; he makes it into an idol and bows down to it! Half of it he burns in the fire, roasting flesh upon the embers; he eats the roast meat and he is satisfied, warming himself and saying, "Ha, I am warm now; I feel the glow!" The rest of it he turns into a god, into an idol, and bows down to it, worshipping it, praying to it, crying, "save me, for you are my god!"

Such men are ignorant and senseless, their eyes are bedaubed until they cannot see, and their minds closed to knowledge; none of them calls to mind--none has sense and wit enough to say to himself, "Half of it I burned in the fire, baking bread upon its embers and roasting meat for food; and am I to make the other half a horrid idol? Am I to bow down to a wooden block?"

Ashes will satisfy a man who is so duped by a delusion that he cannot pull himself up by asking, "Am I not holding to something false and vain?" (Isaiah 44:9-20)².

A way to have a real god is to fashion him out of some reality of which you already are aware or which is already affecting you. Physical matter--stone, glass, steel, wood--is real for you. You make a house from it, and from some wood that is left over you make yourself a god. There is no doubt in your mind that you have something real. But by this, God is not real for you.

You are dissatisfied. Other kinds of reality will make a better god. In the tempestuous forces of the storm you find a reality which you make your god. You make things out of physical reality. From motive reality you take your god. But that does not make God a reality for you.

Or you are more civilized. You understand and believe that ideas are just as dependable realities as matter. From matter you make your physical necessities while you hold the forces of nature to your will. You use ideas of mathematical accuracy and of ethical propriety in your everyday life. And from what is left over of reality in the realm of ideas you fashion a god of ultimate consistency, that is perfection, and of absolute rightness, that is goodness. You believe this idea, this god, is real because other similar ideas work out in your life and are therefore real to you.

You have made very sure that what you call god is real. The question remains, is this real god God?

The mere fact that a man uses discrimination in his choice of a reality for his god is no true sign that he has confronted the concrete reality, God.

²It should be made very clear in this section that we are not talking about the attributes of God objectively, nor are we saying that something about God cannot be represented in a painting or image, an action, or even in an intellectual concept. Nor are we trying to tell what kind of reality God is. Again, we are not saying that God's reality cannot be demonstrated through these other realities.

In the days when ordinary idolatry was the rage, it would have been pretty much of a simpleton who would have said that any old piece of wood was a god. Some discrimination had to be shown, and the older the culture the more the carving had to approximate established forms. Thus, an idol of Buddha is representative of millions of others. It was supposed that anyone who had felt the reality of God would see it this way. But can we believe that all those that happened to have the tendency to carve wood in that manner had already experienced God in some way?

In the same way today people think of some actions, experiences, and emotions, fashioned by people before them to be evidence of the present reality of God in their lives. Vigorous men feel called upon for tears on two occasions--upon the death of a dear one, or in connection with religion. For a thousand years we have learned of a Jesus, meek and mild, and artists have represented Him so. Others believe that a certain mode of action is the reality, God. But is a manner of experience a guarantee of the presence of God? Can we fashion from our emotional heritage or from the experiences of our forefathers, however real, a god that is God? Can we form out of our own experiences the reality of God?

There are others today, on the other hand, who believe themselves opposed to those who insist on a kind of emotional or activistic experience of reality. They fashion their god out of a different residue of reality, namely idea. They are the kind of people who are more likely to have followed the argument this far and to have agreed with it. For them the reality of God is found in proper concepts. It is assumed that God's reality is such that it will work for the same deductive processes in the reason of any man who receives Him. So, if a man is able with the tool of his reason to fashion a concept or complex of concepts identical with those supplied by his intellectual heritage, that is, in theological formulas, he supposes that these proper beliefs are the reality of God. But, is this reality formed from ideas, however true, anything more than a god?

Now there are two kinds of ideas--those that are real, whether anyone thinks about them or not, and those that are true, accurate but existing only in the mind of a person. A mathematical idea is real in itself. On the other hand there are ideas which merely represent reality.

³ We are not asserting here that there is any hypocrisy in emotional or set pietistic experiences. It is to be noted that Jesus called very few people hypocrites. It may be that the reality of God comes to expression in some people's lives just that way.

It is also to be observed that a different kind of emotional set is beginning to be looked at as typically Christian--that of being a smiling good fellow.

⁴ A doctrine may be perfectly true about God. The fact that it is easy for your mental processes to adjust to that doctrine, however, is not proof that God is real to you, although it may be an indication.

Theologians are aware of this and try to make a distinction on the basis of the kind of spiritedness with which one holds to right doctrines. They say that belief includes more than acceptance; it re-

These ideas have no corresponding reality behind them but are conventions that are accepted by society.⁵ For example, when a person goes to a theater he may see some action representing a murder. It is true, that action as he sees it is murderous, but the action he sees does not represent reality. He sees an emotion like weeping on the stage, but there is no real sorrow behind it. He hears the actor say he owns a country estate, but while true for the purposes of the play it is not supported by reality. The public is glad to support such a convention because it recognizes the difference between an idea with a reality behind it and a simple unsupported idea, which is not even a reality in itself. It's just part of the game.

In a drama the ideas are true enough in the sense that everything happening could be real. The fact is they are not real. Obviously, the response of the audience would be entirely different if the action were real.

The question then is, do the emotions, actions and concepts of church people stand for some reality which is projecting itself into their lives as surely as any other reality, or are these ideas and experiences merely subjective conventions of society? If there were no god would anyone feel constrained to invent one? Do all the complicated, finely reasoned ideas of those who do the thinking in the church stand for a real God? Does anyone really believe in God?⁷

Ashes will satisfy a man who is so duned by a delusion that he cannot pull himself up by asking, "Am I not holding to something false and vain?".....((when I call a carved stone of mine, a righteous act, a strong emotion, or a cherished idea the reality of God in my life?)).

III. Responses to Other Life Realities and the Reality of God.

If reality is correctly defined by calling it intrusive, something that must be taken account of, something that is present, or that is there for a person; then we must look at the responses of a person to find out what he treats as real.

quires dependence and trust in the object of belief. That is why it is doubly important that one is not believing in a god which he has fashioned out of his own or other's ideas, a god which might be real enough but not God.

⁵That is, they are purely subjective ideas that are held in common agreement by people who all are aware of their subjectivity.

⁶There are many religious people who spend more money on this public convention of goodnatured, temporary, self-delusion than on the Church which is supposed to be ensnaring not merely a socially accepted idea or convention but a reality behind that idea. To what man is more than a convention?

⁷Again we must emphasize that the question is not whether there is a real God, but whether God is right now real to anyone you know.

For example, consider time. There is no time in which a man is not making some adjustment to physical reality, although most of the time that adjustment is subconscious. Yet, if you were to remind him of any unconscious moment he would immediately be aware of the adjustment. Much of the time, also, he is taking into account action and events, whether close to him or removed. He also is making responses to realities that are merely ideas, such as mathematical and geometrical constructions, rules of etiquette, ethical principles. Even if his response is negative, he often recognizes the reality of the ideas.

Likewise, he spends time with friends and in their interest, and also thinks about them. Possibly, human beings, representing an extremely complex kind of reality, are actually the most real to him. How much of a man's time is conceived of as a response to the reality of God? If you were to remind a man of some unconscious moment would he at once recognize an unconscious adjustment to the reality, God? If God is a reality at all like human beings, how much time does anyone spend in conscious companionship or thought with Him?

Or consider a man's interests, those things toward which his conscious will or free desires are directed. Letters in the American Magazine, written by our soldiers, told us what they were fighting for--a little bungalow, a cute wife, a secure job, and maybe among the freedoms the freedom to give out any religious idea that takes one's fancy. It is imaginable that some ministers, for example, long more ardently for repairs on the parsonage and an increase in salary than for the coming of the Kingdom. Or is there a man who in all the subtle choices that one must make in this stimulating civilization shows that his desires run not so much toward more refined cultural tastes or more intellectual pursuits or more heightened religiosity as toward the reality of God Himself,

What does a man consider really important, For a fine home he will take out an expensive insurance policy. For his wife's vanity he will buy a Buick instead of a Ford. For keeping up with the news he reads the papers half an hour a day. Does God ever crowd these other realities, Does he avoid dirty jokes because God is an intruder or because he happens to be a prude? Why is it important for him to sing in the church choir? Have you ever met a man who believes enough in the reality of God to treat Him importantly?

Think of any conversation, how it always must take account of some reality; or of any action or occupation, how it always has reality for its foil. Is God an object of conversation outside of professional circumstances, like almost all other realities are? Is it therefore only the idea of God that is acted on? People often forget that treating literary figures as real is only a convention. On the other hand, they think and act so little as if God were more than a social convention, an intellectual convenience, that often a mythical literary figure is actually more real than God.

Finally, observe the response of anyone to human beings. We are assured that God is less like an idea than a person. Does anyone act as if God were more than an academic idea? Does anyone act as if God were

even half so trustworthy a personality as any friend? Does anyone give evidence that would cause others to assume that among his real friends is the real God? That peculiar confidence and emotion, that combination of trust and love--faith--does it seem to repose in any actuality outside the circle of one's human acquaintances?

Also wanted: A Sinner!

IV. Realities as Inconvenience and the Reality of God.

Some realities by their very nature in a subjective situation are inconvanient--The loss of an eye, the "honest" weight of a butcher's scale, a narrow street. Reality sometimes presses down on one, limiting, confining, oppressing, and likewise, the reality of God will restrict the man who faces Him.

Realities are not only inconvenient. Sometimes they are incompatible and cannot exist side by side. Sometimes they are opposed in terrible conflict. In war this is especially evident. In the everyday life of most men it is also apparent that the realities of personal intentions, capacities, and desires are maladjusted to the realities of a situation. It is the Christian conviction that as long as man is determined by space and time these realities just as they are are incompatible with the reality of God.

If such is the case the greater the difference between the realities, the greater the opposition; and the deliverance of the one reality as opposed to the other must be hate. Is there any man who feels the realities of his own life so opposed to the reality of God that he can say, "I hate God"? Such a confession is not the mere admission that some unfortunate mistakes have been made which are being remedied. Such a confession is not a process of admitting anything at all. It is rather a full expression, the only honest one, of the turgid realities within man when confronted by the titanic, oppressive reality of God.

One cannot hate or love a mere idea. Therefore to accept an idea about God, or a doctrine concerning Him requires little of man. So a doctrine of sin can easily be entertained. Many people are quite glibly able to see a difference between the ideas about God and the ideas about man. It is quite easy to make the admission that the desires and actions and all such realities in man do not quite fit in with ideas of holiness and purity. But when the awful God becomes a reality to a man, that man is not merely petulant about a bothersome conscience; he is bitter and resentful against a reality that is a condemning opponent. Who, then, has been confronted with a God so real that the realities of his own being cry out their hatred against such an Enemy?

It is said that Diogenes went about one time in broad daylight carrying a lighted candle. When asked what he was doing, he said, "I am looking for a man."

Diogenes was a fool.

But can one be anything except a fool in either case if with the candle of feeble wit he tries to find a sinner? For whoever looks at the candle in the dark will see only the shadow of him that carries it. And if the light of God's own presence shines, then he who is in that light will already know, without the candle, the personal reality of sin.

V. Addenda.

Some will suppose that these comments are directed toward Christian perfectionism. Others may suppose it is a negative comment on the way to achieve salvation. Or others will think that this is another idea added to the mass that have been tossed back and forth in the constant stream of theological discussion. The last is correct. This is only another idea. It may be true. But it was still-born at the moment of conception. It is not the reality of God Himself anymore than are any of the other ideas, no matter how carefully formulated, no matter how closely reasoned. Their purpose is none other than to ask if there is any one as familiar with the reality of God as he is with theological ideas.

In the Middle Ages many people believed in God. Likewise, the Bible represents the Devil as one who has a real belief in God. There is another characteristic which they have in common. They also were confronted by the real God. Whether or not that meeting with the real God led to their salvation is another question.

We are asking the very first question, whether or not anyone now has even met the real God.

It is true, nearly everyone today believes in an idea of God. In this respect not much seems to distinguish the belief of a church-goer from that of an outsider. There is very little to distinguish between the realities that figure in the life of both. Both spend a comparable amount of time on the same kinds of reality, both have quite the same fulfillment of desires, and are oppressed by the same kind of fears.

Finally, this is not a challenge to anyone to prove that he really believes in God. Any proof would be just as little the reality of God and just as much a scrap of paper as this is. The question is, have you ever seen that in the life of another person which convinces you that the real God is acting in him?

Have you ever met a man who really believes in God?

THE CHURCH THEATER

by

Walter A. Kortroy

I

If tomorrow your newspaper's theater page would advertise a new play, a smash hit, produced by a local church or a thrilling, dynamic motion picture, written, produced and directed by the United Lutheran Church of America, you would hurriedly take a second look to make sure that your eyes were not playing tricks on you. We think of the theater and the church to be two widely separated worlds; the one is representative of that which is good and holy, the other, the portrayer of the worldly, seamy side of life. Yet, as any student of history knows, the modern theater owes its very existence to the church which in the Middle Ages gave it birth.

The productions of that by-gone day were not called plays, but pageants, and to the modern sophisticated eye they would indeed have seemed crude and primitive. The age itself was crude and primitive, however, compared to our so-called Atomic Age. The pageant of the Middle Ages satisfied the dramatic urge of the medieval man quite as much as the infamous Tobacco Road or the appealing Life With Father satisfy the modern theater-goer.

The pageants took the Bible as their theme and showed in order man's fall into sin, incidents in the Old Testament, the birth of Jesus and, finally, His death and resurrection. So the drama progressed slowly down through the years, always developing hand in hand with the church. We read of the first mystery plays which brought the dramatic spirit directly into the Mass itself and reproduced the glorious events of the first Easter Day before the thrilled eyes of the worshippers.

When the church had once seen the effectiveness of these plays, it supported them with increased enthusiasm and thus we see the evolution of the morality play such as Everyman, the miracle plays, and finally the masque, the best example of which is John Milton's Comus. The masque was the embodiment of all the previous forms; it contained pageantry, theatricality there and various developments of dramatic technique which it had inherited from its forebearers.

Unfortunately, however, just as the church had begun to "walk with the world" so the drama of the church soon found itself catering to the groundlings and except for a few fine masques and miracle plays there was little semblance of religion left upon the stage. Then the Puritans came into power in England. It was time for a reformation of the theater as well as of the church, but the Puritans, narrowly outlawed the drama entirely and thus finally divorced the church from any relation with things dramatic. The unhappy separation still exists.

II

I believe the time has come--indeed, much precious time has been lost already--when we should forget the past and effect a happy reunion. The church should be aware of the fact, for it is a very obvious one, that it has at its very fingertips a great Book, overflowing with more appealing, exciting drama than a modern playwright could set down in a lifetime. Page through your Bible and you will pick at random such moving scenes as the murder of Abel, Moses before Pharaoh, the call of Samuel, the slaying of Goliath, the life of Christ (almost every incident is worthy of dramatization), and the life of Saint Paul.

I have only mentioned a few; there are hundreds more, perhaps even more noteworthy than these. It is a weak argument to say that these stories are old-fashioned and unpopular. They would make fine productions and the characters to be portrayed would challenge the art and talent of the best actor. These are not tales which are the figment of some writer's imagination but they are true and how well we know that "truth is stranger than fiction!"

I do not propose that the church should immediately give itself over to the management and direction of all the theaters on Broadway, even if that were possible, nor do I see the enacted scene taking the place of the inspired sermon in our worship: God forbid! However, to anyone who is a lover of the great Gospel of Jesus Christ and simultaneously devoted to the drama, it seems sad that we should continue to ignore this fine medium of teaching and preaching the compelling, dynamic story of the Christian Church.

It is true, that in recent times something has been done in this direction, but we must admit that it has always been a rather half-hearted endeavour. Local churches make valiant attempts each year with Christmas and Easter pageants. Constructive as these may be, they are for the most part inadequate; somewhat like the gifts which are carried by three cherubic youngsters who year after year play the three wise men. Their gold is really a gold brick and their costly perfume is actually Dad's after-shave lotion! Most churches do not have the room or the equipment to present a production worthy of the greatness and glory of the story.

The various boards of the Church have from time to time issued short films and lantern slides to tell the story of the Bible and to advertise the work that is done in mission fields. These too are worthy of note and their popularity only serves to enforce the argument for better motion picture material, professionally engineered to appeal to the movie-crazed youngster as much as Ten Lix and Superman.

III

Cecil B. DeMille a number of years ago saw the great dramatic worth of the stories recorded in the Bible and he produced The Ten Commandments and The King of Kings. The latter is still being shown every

Lenten season with good effect, but it is a silent film, produced without the benefit of all the modern developments in the science of motion picture production.

The Church has been taking its rightful place in recent years in a modern world. Its periodicals have become lively, colorful and interesting; its Program is being expanded to attract and retain the soul of modern man. I believe that a sensible, well organized Department of Religious Drama and Motion Pictures is necessary if we would teach the right lessons of Christianity to the best of our ability. This will take time, hard work and a great deal of money, but in the end we shall know that it has been worth it.

GRADUATES: FEBRUARY, 1946

On Tuesday, February 26, 1946, seven men were graduated at services held in the Seminary Chapel. The Reverend Doctor Nathan R. Melhorn was the commencement speaker. The Reverend Elmer E. Zieber, director of the Seminary Choir, was in charge of the music. The graduates are:

Paulus Gerhard Alberti, A. B. Wagner College, 1944,
called by the Board of American Missions.

Frederick Henry Bartelt, A. B. Wagner College, 1945,
called by the Board of American Missions.

George Mott Bass, A. B. Susquehanna University, 1944,
Gettysburg Seminary (1944), called to Messiah Church,
West Lancaster Avenue, Downingtown, Pennsylvania.

Floyd Frederick Buchholz, A. B. Wagner College, 1944,
called to Saint Paul's Church, 26-28 West Main Street
Saint Johnsville, New York.

Robert James Goesser, A. B. Saint Olaf College, 1944,
called to the Philadelphia Seminary as Fellow.

Matthew John Karestes, A. B. Muhlenberg College, 1944,
Navy Chaplaincy.

Carl Wismer Weber, B. S. Temple University, 1944,
called to Saint John's Church, 130 Church Street, Cata-
wissa, Pennsylvania.



MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS DRAMA

by

Robert E. Bornemann

The ancient Church crushed the theater of its day. So fiercely did the early Christian leaders assail the stage that before many centuries had elapsed, the drama had disappeared from the culture of the day. The last contemporary reference to a stage or theater was made in a letter written about the year 533.

It is interesting to read what some of the old Latin Fathers had to say concerning the hated theater. Tertullian, about the year 197 or 198, wrote a treatise called De Spectaculis, or Concerning Public Shows.

Ye Servants of God, about to draw near to God, that you may make solemn consecration of yourselves to Him, seek well to understand the confession of faith, the reasons of the Truth, the laws of Christian Discipline, which forbid among other sins of the world, the pleasures of the public shows...

At first the theater was properly a temple of Venus; and to speak briefly, it was owing to this that stage performances were allowed to escape censure, and got a footing in the world...

Seated where there is nothing of God, will one be thinking of his Maker? Will there be peace in his soul when there is eager strife there for a charioteer? Brought up into a frenzied excitement will he learn to be modest? Nay, in the whole thing he will meet with no greater temptation than that gay attiring of the men and women. The very intermingling of emotions, the very agreements and disagreements with each other in the bestowment of their favours, where you have such close communion, blow up the sparks of passion. And then there is scarce any other object in going to the show, but to see and be seen.

When a tragic actor is declaiming, will one be giving thought to prophetic appeals? Amid the measures of the effeminate player, will he call up to himself a psalm? And when the athletes are hard at struggle, will he be ready to proclaim that there must be no striking again? And with his eye on the bites of bears, and the sponge-nets of the net-fighters, can he be moved by compassion?

May God avert from His people any such passionate eagerness after a cruel enjoyment! For how monstrous it is to go from God's church to the devil's--from the sky to the sty, as they say; to raise your hands to God, and then to weary them in the applause of an actor; out of the mouth, from which you have uttered Amen over the

Holy Thing, to give witness in a gladiator's favour; to cry "forever" to any one else but God and Christ!.....

Not that there is any harm likely to come to you frog men: nobody knows that you are a Christian; but think how it fares with you in heaven. For at the very time the devil is working havoc in the Church, do you doubt that the angels are looking down from above, and marking every man, who speaks and listens to the blaspheming word, who lends his tongue and who lends his ears to the service of Satan against God? Shall you not then shun those tiers where the enemies of Christ assemble, that seat of all that is pestilential, and the very superincumbent atmosphere all impure with wicked cries?

Saint Augustine is also concerned with the license and vice of the theater of his day. In the third book of his Confessions, he recalls how he was fascinated by the stage and the actors.

Stage plays also carried me away, full of images of my miseries, and of fuel to my fire. Why is it, that man desires to be made sad, beholding doleful and tragical things, which yet himself would by no means suffer? Yet he desires as a spectator to feel sorrow at them, and this very sorrow is his pleasure. What is this but a miserable madness? for a man is the more affected with these actions, the less free he is from such affections. Howsoever, when he suffers in his own person, it uses to be styled misery: when he compassionates others, then it is mercy. But what sort of passion is this for feigned and scenic-1 passions? for the auditor is not called on to relieve, but only to grieve: and he applauds the actor of these fictions the more, the more he grieves. And if the calamities of those persons (whether of old times, or mere fiction) be so acted, that the spectator is not moved to tears, he goes away disgusted and criticising; but if he be moved to passion, he stays intent, and weeps for joy.

Such was the nature of the attack led by the Christian Church against the theater. Such was the nature of the battle which defeated the ancient theater so that by the beginning of the sixth century it was no more. But it was one of those masterpieces of irony which brought back the drama in the very midst of the body which had once destroyed it. In the Church, which had only a few hundred years before annihilated the theater, dramatic art was reborn.

In the early years of its life the Church clearly discerned the disastrous effect of the public shows on society, and so it did its utmost to abolish them, so that the religious life of the faithful might not be so endangered. But now, a few centuries later, the church deliberately brought drama back into a new existence. W. P. Eaton suggests this reason for the Church's active participation in the dramatic art: "The church brought drama to life again because it found that the dramatic instinct, deeply rooted in mankind, could be a weapon in the church's hands." By

drama the Church had a means of guiding and teaching its people. Through drama the Church could appeal all the more to the ignorant masses of its members, and while attracting them, it could also instruct them.

It is the purpose of this paper to sketch the rise of drama in the Church, to compare texts and to note interesting features and development in order to ascertain just how the Church made use of its new found device. As we proceed it is also the aim to make some suggestions for the use of this type of drama in the parishes of our own Church. We hope to present the backgrounds and sources of the drama in literature and worship. We shall then include a discussion of the strictly liturgical drama which was used in the actual worship of the Church. This will be followed by a discussion of the English mystery cycles--those of Towneley, Chester, and Coventry. These are also known as the guild plays.

I. BACKGROUNDS.

There were some attempts, either before or contemporary with the rise of liturgical drama in the Church, made at dramatic writing. In Eastphalian Saxony at the Benedictine convent of Gandersheim there lived in the tenth century a nun whose special interest and talent lay in dramatic literature. Her name was Hrotsvitha (or Hrosvitha). She was an admirer and student of the plays of Terence, the Latin poet, and wrote some six plays herself along the same general lines employed by the Roman playwright. A. W. Ward points out that her style, influenced as it was by Terence, can be said to be little more than quasi-Terentian, for she does not employ even his meters.

The object of these Latin compositions written by Hrotsvitha "was to impart a fresh vitality to the traditions of the Christian Church by presenting them in the framework, with occasional reminiscences of the phraseology, of a classical author whose fame was still fresh." Her plays are dramatized legends of saints and martyrs, and she can not be said to have desired anything more than to emphasize in them those religious impressions--faith and love of chastity, and Christian heroism--which were exemplified by those Christians about whom she wrote.

Her works are in type dramas, but it is very unlikely that they were ever performed, even privately by her own circle of nuns. It is, however, to be supposed that they were read aloud or recited by her associates on the days most appropriate to their themes. Du Meril suggests that a good reason for these plays' not being presented in actual performance is to be found in the difficulties of staging as well as the "most revolting situations."

About the same time there was flourishing in England a type of literature sometimes mistaken for drama--the Anglo-Saxon dialogues. While one of the factors in drama is dialogue, this type of Anglo-Saxon literature cannot be considered drama. Even such a piece as the Passion of Saint George, despite its liveliness in relations and dialogue, is not

properly dramatic literature. Nor can the Dialogues of Gregory the Great, the Christ and Satan of Caedmon, the Scandinavian Solomon and Saturnus, or the English Debate of the Body and the Soul be classed even as primitive types of drama.

In France wandering minstrels, jongleurs, exerted a great influence on the development of French drama. Very early they began to turn their literary ambitions to composing dramatic pieces based upon such subjects as Le Miracle de Theophile. In England, however, the minstrels never achieved the place of influence which they had in France. Neither the higher, the more "aristocratic," nor the lower, the more "popular," minstrels had so formative an effect on English dramatic art as the French had on French dramatic development. Nevertheless, the popular minstrels in particular served to create an attitude in the people which encouraged those forces which made up the beginnings of drama in England.

While the plays of Hrotsvitha, the Anglo-Saxon dialogues, the monastic tendencies toward dramatic literature, the activities of the jongleurs and minstrels do not constitute the direct origin of drama in its Medieval rebirth, they are valuable in that they demonstrate the spirit of drama inherent in the people of that age. They serve to give us a background and understanding of the situations from which the drama finally rose. They were preparing the way.

It can be said correctly that drama which came to life in the Middle Ages found its actual origin in the religious activities of the Church. This is especially true in England. The drama sprang primarily from religious worship, but there were also other pursuits and attitudes in the Church which helped to shape the liturgical drama.

Of these ecclesiastical influences A. W. Ward suggests that one which we have already discussed. This extra-liturgical element in the origin of the drama was "...in part purely literary, in part at all events connected with literary pursuits or with the profession of literary accomplishments." With the increase of writing, new forms would be sought, new devices would be employed for expressing the authors' thoughts.

In the monasteries and churches the arts and the love of beauty flourished. In England, as in other places, a monk was required to master some skill or craft for which he was best fitted. The result was the production of illuminated manuscripts, gold and silver plate, ecclesiastical ornament which are the wonder and admiration not only of Europe of that time, but also of the whole world today.

It was partly because of this love of beauty and achievement in art that drama had its beginnings in the Church. The first little plays, even in the form of tropes, are as beautiful as they are in their simplicity, because they are so tempered by art. W. P. Eaton writes: "But the whole scenario (he refers to the Quem quacritis in sepulchro, the Easter trope) is too consciously wrought for artistic effect, the climax too joyously thrilling in its chant of voices and peal of bells, to be the work of men insensible to art. In fact, it can only be the work of men themselves delighting in artistic effects."

Drama, however, had more in common with ecclesiastical art than just artistic achievement. It shared with it the purpose, and perhaps motivating force of its being. Just as the monks spent long years of labor in the re-creation of artistic beauty for the adorning of the house and beauty of God, so drama in its use was dedicated to the glory of God.

Most influential in the re-creation of drama was the worship itself. Not only was it the background and environment from which drama sprang and developed, but it contains dramatic features within it which directly contributed to drama's rebirth. Many authorities think that the evolution of drama begins in the religious and antiphonal music of the liturgy. "It must not be forgotten that the English drama had its origin in religious song and has continued to interweave in harmonious composition the two forms of expression, speech and melody, all the way from the didactic improvisations of the Middle Ages to the present time." Of course, antiphonal singing does suggest dramatic dialogue, but it can only be a beginning, as the Anglo-Saxon dialogues, looking towards full dramatic treatment.

Inherent in the Mass itself are the three fundamental elements, which make drama, for the Mass is lyrical, epical, and pantomimical. It has a dramatic progression from the confession and absolution to the actual Communion to the final benediction. In the growing richness of the ceremonial, the magnificence of the vestments, the ethereal quality of the hymns and chants the Mass has a dramatic power which the ecclesiastics could scarcely have overlooked.

Much has been written on the drama of the Mass, but it might be well in passing to note something of its dramatic character. The Eucharist itself is a portrayal of the story of Christianity. It re-enacts the life of Christ, culminating in the Communicating of Himself to His brethren. The Kyrie, the first of the five great parts of the Mass, may be interpreted as the cry of man in need of the grace of God. The incarnation, God's answer of love to this need of mankind, is symbolized by the singing of the Gloria in Excelsis, first heard by the shepherds when the angels announced the birth of the Saviour. The Creed is the confession of the Christians--perhaps with Peter and the other Apostles--that God in Three Persons has created, redeemed, and sanctified their lives. The Sanctus recalls the beginning of the Passion of our Lord by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! The great love of God in giving His Son to die upon the Cross is remembered in the Agnus Dei. In all this the Christian believers participate in the climax of this drama by partaking of the broken Body and the shed Blood of the Lamb of God.

Besides the Mass there were other liturgical elements which contributed to the dramatic feeling of worship. One of these is still used to good advantage today--the procession. In the Gallican ritual there is an order to be used for the dedication of a church. The bishop with a great procession approaches the closed doors of the church. One of the clergy, however, quasi latens, is stationed inside the doors. When the procession has reached the church three blows are given with a staff on

the doors. An anthem based on Psalm Twenty-four is then sung: Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. From inside the question, "who is this King of glory" is heard, and the choir outside replies, "The Lord strong and mighty, he is the King of Glory." Then the doors are opened and the clergyman hiding inside quickly comes out, quasi fugiens, as the procession sweeps in. The incident is simply a dramatic expulsion of the spirit of evil.

There were also other processions such as that on Palm Sunday when there was a solemn procession about the church or churchyard with palm branches, previously blessed by the priest, to symbolize the triumphal entry. In some French rites this procession employed the same solemnity which we noted above in the dedication of a church.

Passion week ceremonies carried with them many dramatic qualities. The History of the Passion read during the Holy Week services often became something of an oratorio. A tenor voice sang the narrative portions of the History, while a treble took the words of the Jews and disciples; a bass sang the words of Christ. Connected with this, Chambers records the practice in which, "on Wednesday, at the words Velum templi scissum est, the Lenten veil, which since the first Sunday in Lent had hidden the sanctuary from the sight of the people was dropped to the ground." Tenebrae, at the latins of the last three days of the week in which one by one the lights were solemnly extinguished, symbolized the grief of the apostles and others represented by the lights.

Further dramatic effect is found in the ceremonies of Good Friday with which the church sepulchre soon became an indispensable part. Eaton writes this of the sepulchre: "...the entire ceremony of Holy Week made use of it drastically, the cross being placed therein, and sometimes guarded by watchers dressed like the knights of Pilate."

About the sepulchre and the so-called "dead post" there grew up a very elaborate group of ceremonies which graphically and dramatically presented the history of the Passion and Resurrection. An interesting sidelight concerning the use of the sepulchre symbolism may be read in a quotation from the Bishop Hooper's Early Writings, in which the Puritan with characteristic Puritan confusion of art and idolatry, ridicules these symbols. He writes:

The plowman, be he never unlearned, shall better be instructed of Christ's death and passion by the corn that he soweth in the field, and likewise of Christ's resurrection, than be all the deadposts that hang in the church, or are pulled out of the sepulchre with Christus resurgens. What resemblance hath the taking of the cross out of the sepulchre and going a procession with it, with the resurrection of Christ? None at all; the dead post is as dead when they sing Iam non moritur, as it was when they deposited it with in pace factus est locus eius.

Those ceremonies in which on Good Friday are celebrated the Mass of the Presanctified (Missa de praesanctificatorum) and the Adoration of the Cross (Adoratio crucis) and the placing of the cross in the sepulchre (Depositio crucis) portray the faith and praise of the Christians in the sacrifice of Christ and represent His death and burial.

At the Depositio a light is placed in the sepulchre and is not extinguished until Easter morning. Then, early on Easter morning, the removal and elevation of the cross (Elevatio crucis) symbolize the Resurrection and triumph over death. Full accounts and directions for these ceremonies can be read in the Regularia Concordia of St. Ethelwold (tenth century), or the later more elaborate Sermon Sepulchrum (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries). As the trope was displaced from its usage in the Mass to be used at Matins, it came to be a part of these Sepulchrum ceremonies. It should be noted in passing that some of these ceremonies, the Sepulchrum, for instance, grew up with and continued along side the actual drama of the Church.

This is, then, something of the background and history which led up to the rebirth of drama. Both in England and on the continent, drama grew out of the religious activities of the Church. That it should rise primarily in the liturgy is not surprising for inherent in the worship of the Church were elements fundamental to dramatic composition. Taking advantage of these and recognizing the deeply ingrained dramatic spirit of the people the churchmen introduced liturgical drama as a further means of expression and influence.

(Editor's note: To follow in succeeding issues will be Part Two: The Liturgical Drama, and Part Three: The English Mystery Cycles.)

With all thy hart, with all thy soule and mind,
Thou must Him love, and His behests embrace;
All other loves, with which the world doth blind
weake fancies, and stirre up affections blis,
Thou must renounce and utterly displace,
And give thy selfe unto Him full and free,
That full and freely gave Himselfe to thee.

-Edmund Spenser, from "An Hymne
of Heavenly Beautie."

LOVE IS THE ANSWER

by

Theodore W. Jentsch

"We are all guilty of the good we do not do." How true this statement is when we view it in relation to our actions toward our fellow men, the Jews.

Perhaps we don't like the Jews. Perhaps we think we have good reasons. But let's settle down to a little investigation and see if we haven't been unfair. Let's see if it's not dangerous to go around saying "Every Jew is crooked;" "They're no good."

Since "time when", Jews have been insulted, tortured and murdered. I wonder if they have not suffered more than any other people.

For a moment, imagine yourself in the Middle Ages. You are a Jew. Laws have been enacted which exclude you from owning or cultivating land. You are excluded from the guilds of merchants and craftsmen. Since the guilds controlled all manufacturing and handicraft, there were none of your race engaged in these pursuits. You, as a Jew, are also excluded from military and civil service. You are forced into the one remaining occupation--the lending of money for interest. Your ruler also makes you a tax collector--and as such, you are the object of scorn and hate. You are also denied your citizenship and must live in filth and poverty inside the ghetto, separated from the rest of the city--all because you are a Jew.

And now, in this so-called Christian era, in this twentieth century, you are accused of being clannish and shrewd and tricky. You are still a Jew. You are still called a no-good.

No wonder some Jews are shrewd and tricky. No wonder they are ambitious, and excell in many things. No wonder they are clannish. No wonder the Jew is intelligent. (Some even condemn him for that!) If the Jews had not developed such qualities, the race would have perished. Let us never lose sight of the fact that the Jew has as much right to live as we have!

"But the Jew is always putting himself in the limelight." I wonder. Could it not be that we in our insistence that the Jew is a Jew, in our slurs and attacks on him, in our unfairness and bitterness toward him--have done just that which we are complaining about? It is our actions that put the Jew in the limelight.

"Why doesn't the Jew become assimilated into the other races? Why doesn't he conform with the rest of the world?" The answer lies with us. Have we allowed him to become assimilated, or have we at every possible occasion downed him, and in so doing, put him on the defensive? The answer lies with us.

Remember how Imperial Rome charged the early Christians with corrupting the youth of the land, with immoral conduct, even with using the blood of Roman children for their religious rites? The Christian was persecuted because he was a "Christian," not because of individual acts.

There is a parallel to this in the present anti-Semitism. We meet a person on the street. If he is a Jew, we immediately take exception to him, just because he is a Jew. This is entirely unfair. The individual Jew should be judged by his merits or demerits, the same as other individuals of the general public. Oh, what accusations are cast at these people who numbered only 16,000,000 at the beginning of the Second World War, of whom less than 5,000,000 live in the United States.

"The Jews control the New York Stock Exchange." A study of the New York Stock Exchange revealed that there are only four Jews out of the thirty-three members on the board of governors. There were no Jews among the eleven officers. "The Jews run the retail business in the United States." Only five per cent of the chain stores are owned by Jews, and they play little part in the mail order business.

"Jews control the press." Out of 916 daily newspapers in 544 cities of over 15,000 population, only 33 newspapers, three and one-half, are owned or controlled by Jews. The New York Times, the Philadelphia Record and the Philadelphia Inquirer are the largest Jewish owned newspapers. And let this be pointed out--that, by any fair judgment, the New York Times must come out on top as the leading American newspaper---as to style, make-up, caliber of stories, etc. I hope no one stops reading the Times because it is Jewish owned!

"But that other great influencer of opinion, the radio, is controlled by Jews." Let's look at the figures:

Radio Networks

Board of Directors

National Broadcasting Company.	1 Jew out of 13
Columbia Broadcasting Company.	8 Jews out of 13
Mutual Broadcasting Company.	1 Jew out of 9

Executives of Networks

National Broadcasting Company.	1 Jew out of 20
Columbia Broadcasting Company.	6 Jews out of 16
Mutual Broadcasting Company.	1 Jew out of 8
Blue Network	none out of 4

All along the line, the charges of Jewish control fall flat!!

Some of the best thoughts on the Jewish problem appeared in the February issue of Lutheran Women's Work. Dr. G. Elson Ruff, editor of the Lutheran, states in an article:

"The tragedy of the Jews is that they failed to recognize their Messiah. But God still seeks His chosen people. They have not been cast outside the forgiveness and fatherhood of God. But what worse way of winning them to a saving faith in Christ could Christians possibly invent than to hate and persecute them?

"Dislike of the Jews is an ugly thing which has been inherited from dark and superstitious days of long ago. It is a blind prejudice, heedless of fact. Because one Jew is noisy, all Jews are noisy...because one Jew is rich, all Jews are rich...and so forth. This is poor reasoning. Jews differ among themselves, just as others do. Some are good and some are bad, as among the rest of us.

"What kinship we might have with them, even though we may be a long time in winning them to the love of Christ. Their religion is the foundation on which Christianity is built. Their Bible is the Old Testament of our Bible. Their God is our God, the Father of the Lord Jesus. Let us pray for the children of Israel, God's ancient people. In the meantime, it is a good Christian idea to treat them as we like to be treated."

It is the hope that everyone who reads this will take these words to heart. The Jew is our fellowman. Treat him as such. Here is one way in which our Christianity can be shown in our daily lives. Here is a situation that can illustrate the down-to-earth, practical aspects of Christianity, our Religion.

Love, not hate, active fellowship, not mere toleration, will solve the problem. Let the law of Christ's love rule supreme in our hearts in connection with the Jewish question, as well as in all else.

"We are all guilty of the good we do not do!"

What if this present were the world's last night?
Mark in my heart, O Soul, where thou dost dwell,
The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
Whether that countenance can thee affright,
Tears in His eyes quench the amazing light,
Blood fills His frowns, which from His pierc'd head fell.
And can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell,
Which prayed forgiveness for His foes' fierce spite?
No, no; but as in my idolatry
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pity, foulness only is
A sign of rigour: so I say to thee,
To wicked spirits and horrid shapes assign'd,
This beauteous form assures a piteous mind.

-John Donne

REALISM IN THE MINISTRY

by
John W. Dowler

(Editor's Note: Mr. Dowler was awarded the Joseph M. Lotsch prize for the best essay, to be selected by a faculty committee, on the subject, "Realism in the Ministry.")

The Christian ministry faces a challenge today, a challenge perhaps greater than it has ever faced before. In a difficult and critical period of world history, humanity has been loosed from its moorings--from all the old holds and principles and ideals--and seems to be driven forward by a frenzied desire for the new and the different--over an unknown sea towards an unknown destination.

Christian standards in western civilization and throughout the world have in some cases and in some places been swept away altogether. Everywhere they are being undermined, as we journey through what the journalists describe as an "age of transition." New and wonderful advancements in science, in education, in psychology have given man an amazing control over the forces of nature and with it the feeling that he is supreme master of the earth. Wartime inventions and improvements have set in motion certain forces which threaten to grow beyond man's power to control, and with it all, man has become a slave to his own discoveries.

In such an age into which we are now advancing, it is not the future of Christianity alone which is at stake--it is rather the future of the world itself. In a civilization constantly facing the catastrophes of "wars and rumors of wars", it is only the foolish dreamer who can blindly and blissfully sing the praises of this "best of all possible worlds" in the face of a new atomic age which may very well break the world and civilization itself into atoms!

At a time in our history when people throughout the world are turning from religion to science, from Christianity to communism, socialism, fascism, and all the "isms" that have fostered race hatred, national fanaticism and political tyranny--at such a time we might do well to more than think about the problem. At a time when "secular saviours" are springing up on every side to mock the ideals of Christ and Christianity, we might do well to act. At a time when the world is everywhere asking "Does civilization need religion?", it is up to us to provide the answer--and the reasons why. If the church ever hopes to serve in a world such as ours, it must be ready to provide a really vital and effective ministry. In its presentation of a changeless Christ in a changing world, it must be ready to provide a Gospel that is alive, a message that is pertinent, and a ministry that is real..

It might seem to some that the church today is confronted by two alternatives either to conform peacefully to the spirit of the times and act generally as a moral "tonic", or to discover itself left out in the

cold. Conformity or oblivion, either go along with the crowd or be rejected by it. And for many people, realism in the ministry and in the church means well-cushioned pews, beautiful stained glass, and pious sentiments. Dean Inge once said, "Christianity is a creed for heroes, and we are harmless, good-natured little people who want everybody to have a good time." And so-called realistic ministers mount their pulpits to preach on politics, on economic conditions, or perhaps the latest newspaper story--and Christ in Christianity is forgotten! And so the church goes on.

But there are some who have rejected both the alternatives of conformity and oblivion. These are those--and the hope of Christianity rests on men like these--who are proving that the church can be alive to third alternative. And through such men as these, present-day Christianity is slowly but steadily rediscovering its own responsibility to give guidance and light in a bewildered world, to bring the Christian faith to bear upon the great social issues of the day, to preach a Christ as vital for twentieth century businessmen as for first century fish folk. And it is only with a recognition of this responsibility that we can ever expect an effective realism in the ministry.

And just what must the present day minister possess in order to make his ministry and his church real and creative in a new age of secular advancement, what should a young man ask himself before he takes on the responsibilities of a realistic ministry?

First of all--Do I have to be a minister, is there any way I can get out of it?

No man, however qualified, should enter the Christian ministry today unless it is the one great driving force in his life, unless the presence of the Holy Spirit is so real in his heart that he can do no other. For first, last, and always--true through the centuries and for centuries to come--the Christian minister must be filled with the Holy Spirit. The man in the pulpit can never succeed in sharing an experience he has never known himself. Too many ministers go forth Sunday after Sunday to engage in morning and evening "calisthenics", working under the illusion that effective preaching is a matter of the well-turned phrase and the skillful gesture. No man can "preach" the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit preaches itself, and if a man has any doubt of, or is ignorant of the reality of the Holy Spirit, he has no rightful place in the Christian ministry. For himself and for his followers he would be much better off in the real estate business.

Secondly, will my ministry be guided by prayer?

In order to have any degree at all of realism in his ministry, the minister must be a man of prayer.. His work is too great for any one man to carry. He cannot do it alone. In an age that considers conversation of believing hearts with their God as pious nonsense, in an age that looks to the stock-market reports for its daily guidance--in such an age the minister is continually in need of prayer with God, prayer for strength, for support, for comfort, and for guidance, God can't get through to people who refuse to open their hearts to Him. God can't get through to people who know all the answers! The minister who would truly serve must look to a power above his own for inspiration and guidance.

For a realistic ministry, how, and what should I preach?

If the modern preacher seeks reality in his ministry he must preach the Gospel, and that of Jesus Christ. His congregation is not interested in his views on education, government, or sociology--there are experts who can analyse for them in each field. The minister has one duty to perform, and one alone: to preach Christ and Him crucified! That our Sunday sermons make so little difference in the daily thinking and acting of our congregations is one of the most appalling facts that challenge the church today. Good religion is never afraid of facts! But on far too many cases the minister of the "gospel" is reluctant to preach anything but harmless" sermons, airy little word-plays that cannot even hope to stir the minds of his congregation.

We have just concluded a great and terrible world war. Our men are returning to their homes and to their home churches from a life and death struggle. They have learned that all is not well with the world. They have seen blood and agony and death. They have faced a thousand dangers a thousand times a day. They have slept in muddy foxholes and tramped through jungle swamps. They know all about the great conflicts that face men when the outer veneer is stripped away. They have seen them--and they have been through the depths of doubt and Hell. And when these men return, they won't be content for long with the same old "Follyanna" sermons Sunday after Sunday, and they will seek reality from the ministry as well.

People throughout the world see sensationalism every day. Their newspapers are full of it. But people do not seek, nor do they want sensationalism in the pulpit. The Gospel of Jesus Christ needs no "dressing up." Realism in the ministry demands a message that is practical and honestly sincere. Preaching should be from the "life situation" approach, but ever and always in relation to the basic convictions of Christian faith. Religion cannot be fostered in an atmosphere of pretty preaching. As Dr. Russell Snyder has put it, "You can't cure cancer with cosmetics, nor a brain tumor with a haircut." The Gospel is a message of comfort, but it should never make people comfortable. This is not the best of all possible worlds--we are not the best of all possible men--and a realistic ministry should tell us it's time to do something about it! If the minister today would have a congregation of possessing, rather than merely professing Christians, he must drive home again and again that the important thing in religion is not the belief that God is omniscient, but the experience that God knows me, and knows me as a lost and condemned sinner redeemed through Jesus Christ!

A gospel that does not convict of sin is a mockery. And a minister who preaches any gospel but that of the crucified and risen Redeemer can never hope to stir the hearts and souls of his people to faith in Jesus Christ.

Our people are tired of theological hair-splitting in the pulpit. They are interested in life and a way to happiness. Scholarly exegesis has its place, but that place is not in the Christian pulpit Sunday after Sunday. We preach in a modern world. Our Gospel is the Gospel of

the Christ of today and of eternity, not the theoretical doctrines of the medieval church. But in far too many cases today, sixteenth century theology competes with twentieth century thinking--and loses out. And loses out! The Christ who is as vital today as He was two thousand years ago and will be two thousand years from now does not depend upon the theological doctrines of the ages past, and it is up to the realistic minister to present that Christ to the world today--a Christ who is older than the world itself, as modern as tomorrow's headlines, as timeless as eternity!

For realism in his ministry, then, the minister should be filled with the Holy Spirit, he must be a man of prayer, he must preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But one more important question must be raised by the young clergyman:

How shall I live outside the pulpit?

That the realistic minister preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ is important: that he live Christ's Gospel is still more important. The preacher's sermon on Sunday lasts less than an hour, but the life of the one preaching preaches all the rest of the week. An effective minister lives daily the religion he preaches. And living his religion never means living a pretense of pious saintliness. Jesus was ever the great ideal and example of the minister, the pastor, the preacher--but Jesus was more than all these--He was our great ideal and example of the Man. He was natural and friendly and helpful, and these are qualities that his people expect in the minister today. They don't want an artificial, back-sleeping hail-fellow-well-met, nor do they want an unapproachable pietist. Laymen don't like a "Ladies' Sewing Circle" type of minister. They want, and they need a minister who can meet them on their own ground, a man who can help them because he has interest in common with theirs.

A minister must be as much at home with his congregation in his pastoral visits as he is in the pulpit, and he must consider them just as important. He must be understanding and sympathetic to their problems because he has problems of daily living to face himself. He must ever strive to live a Christ-like life, but he must also strive to live it as Christ did, with his feet on the ground.

The realistic minister is a business man. This does not mean that he should "run" the congregation and everything connected with it, for the effective minister is always ready to take the advice of those more expert in the financial field than himself. It does mean, however, that he should not consider money matters beneath his dignity. And effective churches are those which are administered on a sound financial foundation. An effective minister is not afraid or embarrassed to ask his congregation for generous contributions of money, time and talent. A religion that costs nothing does nothing!

The minister, to be successful in his job, has one for others to do as well. A Christian church can never be a one-man organization. But how many congregations do you know of today whose pastors head all major organizations in the church and control the rest? The successful minister is always on the lookout for leaders among his people. Active workers hold the church together, and effective pastors lead from the background.

It is not necessary for the pastor to be president of the Men's Bible Class in order to insure its spiritual continuance and growth. A winning coach spurs his team from the sidelines while the captain takes the field! Young people's groups will develop greater leadership ability and greater sense of responsibility and importance to the church as a whole when their officers are chosen from their own group. The pastor is there for consultation, for suggestion, for guidance—but, to be effective, never for dictation.

And so with the Sunday School, the Ladies' Aid and the choir. Far too often the minister feels it his duty to "supervise" every meeting of every organization, and how often might a meeting have been more free, more informal, and more effective had the minister been elsewhere! How much more times some ministers would have to give to their own duties, if they would only not feel under obligation to tend to all the auxiliary branches of the congregation. A minister needs time, too, for relaxation, for reading, for contemplation, for communion with God. He is not a twenty-four hour a day automaton, and it's time he realized it. Many clergymen would serve their people better if they spent more time in their studies and less in their meeting rooms.

If he would have realism in his ministry, therefore, the minister must be filled with the Holy Spirit, he must be a man of prayer and consecration, he must preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and he must live the message he preaches, wherever he goes. His ministry must be positive, not "what's wrong with the church", but "what's right with the church." His message to the world must never be merely a negative, tearing down affair, but always a positive tangible message which preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a modern age.

The realistic minister must go all-out. No halfway measures will do. Unless his message is so compelling that he can do no other than proclaim it to the whole world, his work is in vain. The ministry is not looking for, the ministry is not the place for half-hearted, like-warm Christians. Realism in the ministry demands a minister on fire with the spirit of the risen Lord.

In a new and powerful scientific age, the church and the ministry must be ready to preach the Christ who brings together the confused and meaningless efforts of our lives, whose kinship over us is the best thing that can happen to us, who fills us with a sense of aim and purpose, who raises our strength and courage to new heights, who gives us the blessings of peace, who fills our hearts with renewed hope, who assures us of eternal fellowship with God.

The story is told of the pessimist who looks up scowling from reading the news in the morning paper. "Why, I could do better than that myself!" And the optimist replied, "That's just what you're here for. Come on, let's do it!"

And that's the job for the realistic minister in the world today. There's a job to do—a tremendous job. It's not an easy one, but for the truly consecrated servant of Christ there is no other road open for travel. And with confident, determined men—men with their foot firm on the ground

and their eyes with fixed on the goal before them--with such men the church will emerge to serve as it has never served before.

The world needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the church needs effective God-guided men to proclaim that Gospel. If Christianity, if the world is to survive this new scientific age, God grant us such to lead!

DIRECTORY OF NEW STUDENTS

(Entered The Philadelphia Seminary, March, 1946)

Billow, Harry Roy, Main Street, McAlisterville, Pennsylvania. A. B., Muhlenberg College, 1946. Trinity Lutheran Church, the Reverend H. J. Billow, pastor.

Billow, Paul William, Main Street, McAlisterville, Pennsylvania. A. B., Muhlenberg College, 1946. Trinity Lutheran Church, the Reverend H. J. Billow, pastor.

Engel, Bert Bixby, 830 Auburn Avenue, Buffalo 9, New York. A. B., University of Buffalo. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, the Reverend Ralph Loew, pastor.

Erb, Alfred H., 641 North 63 Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A. B., Muhlenberg College. Saint John's Lutheran Church, the Reverend Clifford E. Hays, pastor.

Howland, Allan O., 29 Nichols Street, Mashanticut Park, Cranston 9, Rhode Island. A. B. (sociology and psychology), Texas Christian University. Cranston Street-Roger Williams Baptist Church.

Johnson, Oscar E., Trinity Seminary, Blair, Nebraska. Lacking three hours for A. B., Duna College. Saint Paul's Lutheran Church (NEL), no pastor at present.

Miller, James Bulmer, 535 East Bertsch Street, Lansford, Pennsylvania. A. B., Muhlenberg College. Trinity Lutheran Church, the Reverend Alfred L. Long, pastor.

Moock, Frederick W., Jr., 6730 Sprague Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Special Student. Reformation Lutheran Church, the Reverend Wilton D. Ernst, pastor.

Moore, J. Brooks, 3431 North 19 Street, Philadelphia 40, Pennsylvania. Special Student. Nativity Lutheran Church, the Reverend Warren C. Johnson, pastor.

Rinck, Charles Frederick, Jr., 7367 Woolston Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A. B., Muhlenberg College. Saint Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church, no pastor at present.

Rutrough, Billy Fisher, 200 Hampton Avenue, Roanoke, Virginia. A. B., Roanoke College. Virginia Heights Lutheran Church, the Reverend Frank Eford, pastor.

Sanborn, John Bell, 1961 Hart Street, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. B. S. (chemistry), Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint John and Saint Peter, Syracuse, New York, the Reverend Viggo Swenson, pastor.

(Returned to the Seminary after serving in
the armed forces of the United States.)

Hein, Emil August, 79 Allen Street, Terryville, Connecticut. A. B., Wagner College. Saint Paul's Lutheran Church, the Reverend Fred Forester, Ph. D., pastor. (Army)

Latshaw, Burlington B., Jr., Dornisfe, Pennsylvania. A. B., Muhlenberg College, University of Pittsburgh. Saint John's Lutheran Church. (Army Air Forces, pilot)

Taylor, John Roderick, Allentown, Pennsylvania. A. B., Muhlenberg College. Saint John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Reverend W. C. Schaeffer, D. D., pastor. (Navy)
