

The Lutheran Church
and
Canadian Culture

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I HAVE CHOSEN as my theme for this Inaugural address, "The Lutheran Church and Canadian Culture". In so doing I realized anew that environment exercises a far-reaching influence upon the Church. This seems almost self-evident. But I was also led to consider that the Church influences its environment. This influence is not always evident. We should be able to find this influence in answer to questions like these: Has the Lutheran Church influenced Canada's national life? Has she through her whole attitude and her members enriched Canadian artistic life. What contributions has she made to economic development in Canada? What has she done and what is she doing for the Canadian population through education? Has she helped to build a good Canadian citizenship? Through a positive influence in these matters a Church contributes to Canadian Culture.

It has been and still is the custom in Canada to evaluate the contribution of an individual or a group of individuals to Canadian national life, to education, to the pursuits of literature, of art and of music—in short, the contribution to culture—largely on a racial basis. This is evident in the procedure of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Every census of Canada's population since 1871 with one exception (1890-91) has a rubric which records the racial origin of all inhabitants. From the Diary of the wife of the first Lieutenant Governor of Canada, Mrs. Simcoe, in the 18th century to Murray Gibbon's *Canadian Mosaic* in the 20th, the contribution of an individual or group of individuals is spoken of and primarily evaluated on a racial basis. Only on very rare occasions is a cultural contribution evaluated on a religious or confessional basis.

It would be interesting to evaluate the contributions of the various Christian Denominations to Canadian Culture on a religious basis. However, this evening we shall have to confine ourselves to one of these Christian Communion, the Lutheran Church. Even this survey must of necessity be incomplete owing to the short time at our disposal.

I: The Lutheran Church in Canada — a Canadian Church

In order to contribute to Canadian Culture, the Lutheran Church must be a Canadian Church.

She is a Canadian Church because she has entered into Canadian History.

As early as 1619 a Danish Lutheran Pastor, the Rev. Rasmus Jensen, set his foot on Canadian soil at Hudson Bay. He had been chaplain to Jens Munck and his men on their famous expedition in search of the northwest passage. All but three members of the expedition succumbed to the hardships

of winter. Among those who died was the Rev. Rasmus Jensen. By his death the seed of the Lutheran Church was planted in the soil of the "true north, strong and free."

More than a century later the early Lutheran settlers of Nova Scotia lived and gave their lives in the search for and preservation of that freedom which is at once our spiritual and cultural heritage: freedom to worship in accordance with the faith of their fathers.

In the years of the American Revolution an estimated number of 35,000 people came to Canada from the United States out of a feeling of loyalty for the British Crown. They have subsequently been spoken of as United Empire Loyalists. Among them were a number of Lutheran families who made their home in Nova Scotia.

Other Lutheran United Empire Loyalists came to Upper Canada as members of the King's Royal Regiment of New York under the leadership of Sir John Johnston. The majority of them settled in the St. Lawrence Valley. Within a short time these settlers, the majority of whom were Lutherans,¹⁾ contributed to the prosperous development of this section of Canada through thrift and industry in flour mills and saw mills, at the loom and in the tilling of the soil. Concerning them the wife of Canada's first Lieutenant Governor, Mrs. Simcoe, has written in her diary that "their houses and grounds have a neater appearance than those of any other people."²⁾ Thus they contributed to the economic development of Canada.

Likewise we find members of their number active in the political arena. In his *Canadian Mosaic* Murray Gibbon tells us of a Lutheran Palatine "who became a good Canadian" and was a United Empire Loyalist. His name was Henry Markley. In the year of the Declaration of Independence he was shot at and wounded by an anti-British neighbor. After recovering from his wound and being imprisoned he made his escape to Canadian soil at Niagara. There he joined the King's Royal Regiment of New York. At the end of the War of Independence in 1783 he took up land at Williamsburg in Dundas County. From 1804-1808 he served as a representative of Dundas County in the House of Commons. It is said of him that he was honest and independent, of sterling integrity, of humorous disposition and a frequent guest at the Governor's table."³⁾

When Murray Gibbon, therefore, states in the opening pages of his *Canadian Mosaic*, "The coming of the United Empire Loyalists made possible the Canada we know", we rejoice in the knowledge that also through them the Lutheran Church has had a part in making Canada.

This share of the Lutheran Church in helping to build Canada is not limited to the history of the past; it is continuing in the immediate present. Nor is it limited to Canada's East; we likewise find it in the West. This may be seen from an experience related by the Hon. J. G. Gardiner, Minister of Agriculture. I have reference to an occurrence reprinted from the House of Commons *Hansard* in the *Canada Lutheran* in July, 1943. Mr. Gardiner was attending the military funeral of a young doctor who had enlisted at the out-

1) Heinz Lehmann, *Z. Gesch. d. Deutscht. in Canada*. Stuttgart, 1931 p. 50.

2) *Diary of Mrs. Graves Simcoe*, p. 105.

3) Murray Gibbon, *Canadian Mosaic*. Toronto, 1938, p. 168, 169.

break of the war and died of pneumonia after two years of service. After Mr. Gardiner had made some explanatory remarks to a committee, he went on to state: "The further point I wish to make is this: We were led into a church of the Lutheran Faith. The service was conducted in the German language, and the hymns were sung both in German and English at the same time. A thousand people attended the service—Poles, Germans, Anglo-Saxons, and people of other nationalities. But I am sure hon. members in the committee will agree with me that an incident of that kind in a country such as ours, under these conditions, does mark the opening of a new era, an era of international understanding among all the nationalities who have come to this country, an understanding which will result and has already resulted in the building of a lasting Canadianism."

In our estimate this occurrence illustrates that the Lutheran Church is a "cementing element"¹⁾ in the building of Canadian Nationhood. It provides evidence that the Lutheran Church influences its environment. It makes its contribution to Canadian unity, and cultivates understanding and good will among Canadians.

Today Canadian Lutherans from the East and from the West, together with their fellow citizens, are paying the greatest price anyone can pay to preserve that which their forbears sought and learned to love on the coast of the Atlantic, the fertile valley of the St. Lawrence and the vast expanse of the prairies: political and religious freedom. In the present war 18 Lutheran chaplains are with the Canadian Armed Forces; six of them are serving overseas. Twenty thousand men and women of the Lutheran Faith are serving their country on land, on the sea and in the air.

In thus taking her full share in the discharge of her national responsibilities, the Lutheran Church is expressing the spirit of her confessions. She is at the same time creating the necessary conditions for entering in upon Canadian culture in a fuller measure in the years which lie ahead. To a greater degree she will be recognized as an indigenous Church. Her contributions to Canadian Culture will primarily be evaluated from a religious rather than a racial point of view.

II: The Lutheran Church in Canada — a Cultural Church

The Lutheran Church is a Cultural Church. It is a cultural Church in the sense that it has cultural implications. As a Church it desires and prays that the gifts of nature and the talents of man shall be sanctified by their consecration to the Glory of God and the welfare of Humanity.

In order to show that this is true of the Lutheran Church in Canada we should have to speak of poets like the Rev. Justus B. Linderlohn of Port Arthur, whose poems have appeared in Watson Kirkconnell's *Canadian Overtones*; or of Clara Bernhardt of Preston, Ontario, who has published two collections of her poems in recent years under the titles of *Silent Rhythm* and *Far Horizon*. Recently Miss Bernhardt received considerable attention in the *Saturday Night* for her voluntary mission of comfort and sympathy through the circulation of her poem "*Last Words of An Airman*".²⁾

1) op. cit. p. 3.

2) Canada Lutheran, Sept. 1944, p. 22.

We should also have to speak of the contributions to music in Canada by Augustus Stephen Vogt who as a thirteen year old boy played the organ in St. James Lutheran Church in Elmira, Ontario, and afterwards secured international reputation with the Mendelssohn Choir of Toronto and was given a place among the *Sons of Canada* by Augustus Bridle,¹⁾ as well as in the *Standard Dictionary of Canadian Biography*

Then there are the contributions of members of the Lutheran Church to scientific advancement. We may think of Sir Adam Beck, the father of the "development and distribution of power from Niagara Falls and the Hydro-Electric Commission."²⁾ Or we may think of George Klein of Ottawa who is engaged in scientific laboratory research for the Canadian Government. He was recently mentioned in the King's Honor List and received the O.B.E. for his outstanding contribution to government service.³⁾

But above all the Lutheran Church in Canada is and will become a cultural Church through Christian Education. Her contribution to Canadian Culture will to a great degree be in proportion to her promotion of and advance in Christian Higher Education.

Christain Higher Education in the Canadian Lutheran Churches is being promoted today in the humanities in three Junior Colleges and one College leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree, and in theology in two Seminaries: one at Saskatoon and one here at Waterloo. The Seminary at Saskatoon is affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan. Waterloo College is affiliated with the University of Western Ontario in London. We are happy in this affiliation. We feel that by this relationship advantages are bestowed upon us. It makes accessible to us valuable guidance in academic matters. It goes a far way toward maintaining in our institutions a high academic standard. We greatly appreciate the continued interest which the administrative officers of the University of Western Ontario show in our college. At the same time we are happy that we in turn may contribute to Higher Education in this our happy relationship a positive Christian emphasis.

This affiliation of a Church college with a State University is deserving of a further interpretation in the light of the history of Education. Previous to the Age of Enlightenment the Church and Education stood united. Following the Age of Enlightenment there came the trend to separate Church and Education. Church colleges very often became State Colleges. The State College excluded the Church. Theology of the Church no longer remained the "queen of the sciences". Theology was separated from Education, and Education from theology. The arts and sciences were seen apart from the event of God's revelation in Christ, and God's Revelation was seen apart from the arts and sciences. The Seminary drew apart from the world into its cloistered nook. The ever-widening chasm between theology

1) Toronto, 1916. p. 139-147.

2) Standard Dict. of Can. Biog. Toronto, 1934. p. 2.

3) Canada Lutheran, July, 1943. p. 4.

and Education, this suicidal divorce of God's Revelation from human destiny, this unscriptural separation of the Christian Faith from the Christian Life is the hall-mark of our secularized culture. It is this secularized culture which has plunged twentieth century civilization into the idolatrous worship of man instead of God, of reason apart from revelation, of science without theology.

It is this negative outcome of our present culture which has caused concern to men like President Hutchins of the University of Chicago. I should like to quote some of the statements President Hutchins made at the Inauguration of the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago. It is a positive answer to this negative outcome. "The theologian," said President Hutchins, "pursues his studies in the context of natural knowledge. Everything which any other part of the university knows is valuable to him. Without a university he is under the obligation to master all the sciences himself. Since he cannot do this, he is likely to relapse into indifference to them and teach his subject as though it were a complete and finished museum piece. In this view the closer the connection between the theological school and the university the better it will be for the theological school.

And the better it will be for the university. Theology and the theological school are at the apex of the university and its studies because they seek to supply the answers to the ultimate questions about the most fundamental matters with which the university is concerned. . . ."¹⁾

With reference to theology and education, reason and revelation, Christian Faith and Christian Life, we should say, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." It is therefore the concern of Christian Higher Education constantly to be on the alert to promote the process of correlation and correction between reason and revelation, theology and education, faith and life. It is this historic revelation of God in His Son, Jesus Christ, which will prevent us in our present culture from descending "from the perspective of a bird to that of a frog."²⁾ And—if we should continue in Spengler's metaphor—it is one of the chief functions of Christian Higher Education to imbue the minds of young men and women with this "perspective of the bird".

I feel that the affiliation of Waterloo College and Seminary with the University of Western Ontario affords an opportunity, to some degree to impart to our Canadian Culture something of that "perspective of a bird".

And I am, therefore, happy that I may serve an institution of Higher Education where Seminary and College, Theology and Science, revelation and reason are working side by side in that process of mutual correlation and correction, vibrant with all of life. It seems to me for that reason that at Waterloo College and Seminary, together with our sister institutions, ours is a unique opportunity to interpret the Lutheran Church as a cultural Church within the cosmopolitan fibre of Canadian life.

1) Quoted in the *Christian Century*, Chicago, Nov. 17, 1943. p. 1327.

2) O. Spengler, *Decline of the West*. New York, 1939. p. 43.

III: The Lutheran Church—the Church of the Cross

The Lutheran Church will be enabled to fulfill this high mission inasmuch as she is and remains the Church of the Cross. Let us consider this function of the Church in our present Canadian cultural setting.

In recent years we have witnessed significant changes in Canadian political life—changes which will affect our national destiny. They are indicated by the change in name of one of Canada's oldest political parties: the Conservative party. Under the pressure for social and political reform, it has added the word "Progressive" to its name. These changes are even more evident in the origin and rise of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. However we may interpret these changes, no matter what our party allegiance or political philosophy, one thing is certain: these changes are indicative of a demand for social transformation based on either political revolution or reformation. The rise of socialism in its varied forms as represented in Canadian political parties has injected into our political thinking and action some stimulating seasoning. No longer is a Federal election merely a choice between two types of political economy or between party traditions. From now on a Federal election will involve a choice between divergent political philosophies which will affect all aspects of Canadian life: educational, economic, political, scientific, religious. In short, Canada stands at the crossways of her culture.

In this hour, which becomes even more dramatic by the absence of all sensationalism, the Church of Jesus Christ senses deeply her commission to be, not a purely social organization, not merely a society of the religious, not a mixture of politico-religious ideas, but to be the *Church* i.e. the Church of the Cross.

Canada's cultural progress needs social legislation. A clear definition and promotion of political thought and action for the welfare of her people will assist in lifting her to higher levels of cultural attainment. Educational reform, adjustment and confirmation is at the hub of the wheel of cultural progress.

But if our strained efforts for culture are not to be characteristic of decline, if our cultural failure is not to end in disillusionment, and our cultural progress express itself in undue pride—in other words, if our total cultural efforts are not to end in one of these twofold forms of disaster—then we need to see God's attitude and man's modern situation in the light of the Cross!

At the bottom of disillusionment and pride is man's sin. God's answer to man's sin is the Cross. It marks the condemnation of man's sin according to His Justice. At the same time it is the evidence of God's treatment of man according to His love. Thereby the Cross has become the milestone in humanity's history. It marks an event of eternity in time: the event of God's forgiving love. This forgiving love of the Cross is God's answer to man's despair and pride.

Both despair and pride represent man's intoxication with a sense of his own *power*; despair is evidence of its absence; pride is evidence of its presence. The forgiving love of the Cross is God's power in the life of man. It is the transforming power of the Cross. It drives out pride and rescues from despair.

To proclaim and live out this "dynamic" of the Cross is the mission and commission of the Church of Jesus Christ. Basically and primarily she proclaims this message for the salvation of the individual. But contemporaneously she thereby proclaims and makes this power effective in the realm of social betterment, educational progress, national endeavour. In so doing the Church performs a cultural mission which has its root in the saving Cross.

There have been cultures outside the pale of the Cross. And they have flourished. And they have wrought destruction. Modern secular culture of the West is ascending new heights of achievement without the Cross in the realm of scientific achievement and mechanized progress. We, the generation of this century, are the living witnesses of the mixture of curse and blessing it has wrought in this global conflict. It can, therefore, safely be said: all culture without the sobering and empowering Cross at its root is destined to end either in the suicidal despair of a Judas or a Tower-of-Babel experience as the inevitable consequence of national presumption.

The Church of Jesus Christ is continuing to render self-effacing service to every country—friend or foe. But no greater service can the Church of Jesus Christ render our own Canadian Nation, no greater contribution can she make in this hour of destiny to her young cultural life than this: to be and profess that which her Founder intended her to be, the Church of the Cross.

We would say in conclusion: secular philosophers cannot give this perspective to Western Culture. Nor can they give it to Canadian Culture. The perspective of the bird i.e. of Eternity can be given to Canadian Culture only by the Church through the proclamation of the Cross. Secular philosophers and educators, economists and scientists, artists, musicians and thinkers *can* greatly enrich our Canadian Culture. But alone the Church through her eternal message of the Cross can supply the true and ultimate perspective.