

2-1-1955

## Brief Studies

Lewis W. Spitz

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

William A. Buege

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Spitz, Lewis W. and Buege, William A. (1955) "Brief Studies," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 26, Article 11.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol26/iss1/11>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

## BRIEF STUDIES

### A CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD WAR

The 27th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, assembled at Houston, Tex., June 17 to 26, 1953, resolved, "That this Convention respectfully ask the Honorable President of Synod, Dr. J. W. Behnken, to direct a theologian of our church to prepare a clear and concise statement on "A Christian's Attitude Toward War," and, "That this statement be published in the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, the official theological journal of our church, and in the *Lutheran Witness*." The following propositions are presented in response to this resolution. In view of the complex nature of government and the unsettled state of international law, the propositions can obviously not cover every phase of a subject so vast in scope and of such far-reaching implications. Within the limits imposed by brevity, they do, however, set forth the position of various theologians of our church with regard to war, and more specifically with regard to conscientious objectors to war, as it has been defined in our official literature. This position may be summarized as follows:

1. A Christian believes that his government has been instituted by God. In recognition of this fact he respects and honors it as God's servant, obeys its laws, pays his taxes, and prays for all that are in authority (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13, 14).

2. As God's servant a nation's government is obliged to protect its citizens in their natural and acquired rights, not only against domestic criminals, but also against foreign foes.

3. To enable it to carry out these obligations, the government is invested with police power. The exercise of this power implies authority to organize and control armed agents of the peace. The duty to protect citizens against the assaults of foreign foes involves the specific power to create and maintain weapons of war and to enlist the armed forces necessary to wage war.

4. God does not condemn the profession of a soldier (Luke 3:14; 14:31; 1 Cor. 9:7), but concedes to the government the power of the sword (Rom. 13:4). At the same time, however, He blesses the peacemakers (Ps. 34:14; Matt. 5:9). Accordingly a Christian prays for his

government (that he may lead a quiet and peaceable life, 1 Tim. 2:1-3), personally works to maintain peace, and opposes the demonic forces which cause wars (James 4:1; Rom. 12:18-21).

5. Although a Christian recognizes the right of the government to call him to arms in a just war, he does not concede that right to the government in an unjust war (Acts 5:29; Rom. 13:1-7; Matt. 22:21). In view of the complex nature of modern international affairs, it is extremely difficult for a citizen who is not acquainted with all the factors which may lead his country into war to determine whether or not a specific war is a just war. This difficulty also holds true for members of the church who are not acquainted with the international problems of their government. Therefore the question whether in a specific case the government is waging a just or an unjust war is usually not for the church to determine, but must be referred to the judgment of the individual (Luke 12:14; Acts 25:11).

6. A Christian who believes that God has given the government the power of the sword is not a pacifist; but if anyone is convinced in his own mind either that the use of military force for any purpose whatever is wrong or that a specific war is not a just war, he must refuse to bear arms, for he must not violate the dictates of his conscience. If he is not certain, he should give his government the benefit of the doubt, since God, who has instituted the government, will hold it responsible for its acts (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13, 14).

7. A Lutheran Christian's attitude toward his government, also with respect to war, is aptly stated in Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession, which says: "Of Civil Affairs they [the Lutherans] teach that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God, and that it is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to judge matters by the Imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers."

8. In conclusion, inasmuch as the question of war has disturbed the conscience of some of the members of the church in the past and in view of the character of modern warfare may do so again to an even larger extent, our church should concern itself with the wider aspects of the problems involved and encourage its members, both individually and collectively, to study them. Above all, may our church continue to pray God to preserve us from war and bloodshed.

L. W. SPITZ

## TRAINING A CONGREGATION TO APPRECIATE A NEW CHURCH

By WILLIAM A. BUEGE

"I love Thy Zion, Lord, the house of Thine abode!" More often than not, congregations love everything else about their new church except the fact that it is the house of God's abode, the place where His honor dwelleth, the temple of the Almighty, where men may gather and behold the glory of the Lord. This is notably the case where a congregation, after long years of planning and real financial striving, has been able to accommodate itself with facilities that were previously lacking and sorely missed because all that it had was a place of worship. Now it finds itself suddenly blessed with a gleaming stainless-steel kitchen, a vast room for the serving of dinners, an even vaster room for play and recreation, and more than adequate space for all the social functions that any church might care to indulge in. If all of this is somehow or other tied up with the new church building, there is more than a human tendency to overemphasize one to the neglect of the other, and you don't have to be too human to imagine which will receive the greater emphasis. In fact, it often is quite understandable for more reasons than one that the recreational facilities should come in for the greater share of the attention. Pastors themselves might unwittingly give real impetus to this overemphasis by using the adjuncts of the church far more than the church itself. Furthermore, people learn to love by constant, pleasant association, and if the associations are more constant and more pleasant in the parish hall than in the church, we are merely giving natural, human inclination a more than gentle shove in the wrong direction.

Repeatedly, almost *ad nauseam*, we and our people must be reminded that we are a congregation not by reason of the fact that we have a very active and successful social program going, but because we gather about the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the Sacraments. Our real fellowship does not consist in the fact that we know each other and have fun together and eat together from time to time, but altogether in the oneness of our faith in Christ. And faith still "cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God," so that apart from the hearing of that Word our fellowship is nothing more than the gay and gladsome gatherings of clubs, lodges, and fraternities. Whatever of parish hall activities are engaged in can only be manifestations of the fellowship of Christ which the Holy Spirit has created by the Gospel. This would make the church pretty well the fount from which the broadening stream of Christian life

flows and not the end shore that receives the thrust of the last small wave of action. And we will never bring our people to this kind of an understanding by trying to reduce the number of our services to the barest minimum while stepping up all other activities to the highest attainable maximum. It is sheer folly to build the biggest church that we can so that we are able to accommodate the whole congregation at one time and thus eliminate the need of extra services. We should urge as many morning services as possible, conduct regular vespers on Sunday evening and observe all the various feast days that are a part of the Christian calendar. Far from dropping midweek Advent and Lenten services, we should add more, so that, if in no other way, the weight of sheer numbers will be on the side of the church over against other buildings.

It would also seem that a large part of the training of a congregation must precede the actual building of a new church. If the congregation has no real knowledge of what it wants its church building to accomplish, how can it build intelligently? As strange as it seems, it would appear that few enough people ask themselves about the function of their church, so that the finished product often leaves much to be desired. That this is more than an idle statement is seen by the fact that so many churches are finished products before it even occurs to anyone that there will have to be some speaking in it. The result is an acoustical monstrosity that must be corrected with a loud-speaker system, or a reverberating throbbing that makes all present feel that they are sitting inside a big bass drum. Far too often it is too late to train people to appreciate their new church because there is little enough about it to be appreciated while the single function of its existence cannot be served because the Gospel comes with all the unnaturalness of the totally irrelevant. However much we may think of certain forms, ancient or modern, the form must always subserve the purpose of our Lutheran worship. Stop and think for just a moment what we are training our people for if the church building is not well adapted to its purpose, while the parish hall facilities leave nothing to be desired. This is as true of lighting as it is of acoustics, of warmth and beauty as of heating and adequate space between pews. We might well ask ourselves where our people would rather be, and if so, why?

Without a doubt, the finest training is through the power of example. Very often the decorum of the pastor and his manifest appreciation of the church is going to be the most stimulating influence that his people can have. But through the judicious use of organiza-

tions in the church, and especially of the leadership of the church, much can be accomplished. For example, we have kneelers in our new church. We suggested that we follow the rubrics and kneel where it is said we may kneel. We also suggested kneeling at the General Prayer and the Lords' Prayer, reminding the people that kneeling is as much a sign of humility in the sight of God as the folding of the hands, and one is no more "Catholic" than the other. The people took to this very well, especially when they recognized the propriety of publicly kneeling before God when we Americans would do nothing of the kind before men. But what about using the kneelers for prayer before the service began? We suggested nothing. But shortly after our church was dedicated, we installed the new officers of the congregation. These men followed the choir in procession, and when they took their place in their pews at the front of the church, before the assembled congregation they knelt and prayed before they were seated. From that time on, the majority of our people do the same, and that without a word from the pastor. That type of reverent appreciation on the part of respected men did more than anything that I could say.

From time to time it may be a good idea to open or close organizational meetings in the church so that the people would come for no function unless they spent some time in the church. This could do much to disassociate their minds from anything of a purely social nature taking place at the church. Furthermore, the people must know the reason for everything in the church, otherwise it is difficult to imagine how they can appreciate it. This is always the difficulty with abstruse symbolism: it is so wholly unrelated to life that even if it is explained once or twice, its meaning is readily forgotten. If you use three candles, be sure the people know why: why three, and why candles when we have perfectly good electricity. Too often we as pastors take things for granted that to the people are utterly meaningless. Why the change in colors from time to time? Why an altar rail if there be one? Why does the pastor face the altar at some times and at others the people? Why the particular garment or vestments that the pastor wears? And above all, why the different forms that come under the heading of "Liturgies"? If these things have no meaning and no purpose, they have no place in the church; if they have, then the people should know what the meaning and purpose are, if we expect them to appreciate these things as much as we do. Or do we?

If you have something worth appreciating, then much association with it will help the people to appreciate it the more. If you have

something meaningful, then the appreciation of the people will depend largely on whether it has that meaning for them. But finally, and perhaps more than anything else, the congregational appreciation will grow to the extent to which they receive the ministry of God in the church and find there the certainty that their sacrifices are accepted by God. With specific reference to the sacrificial aspect of worship this means the participation of the congregation, full participation in the singing, the praying, the preaching, the giving. We must always keep our people aware of the fact that the church is not a theater where they come as spectators. Thus if the performance please them, it has been worthwhile; if it does not entertain them, it is time wasted. The church, as Kierkegaard points out, is a stage, but God is not the Actor while the people form the audience. God is the Audience and we, people and pastor, are on the stage, and the single question is whether our performance pleases God. It will to the extent to which it is the worship of the contrite and the broken-hearted, the adoration of the believing, the listening of the eager, the drinking in of empty hearts, the rededication of the self in every part that can be termed "sacrificial." Any church, old or new, is appreciated as it becomes Calvary for the people, the sinful people whose salvation is the Cross and whose God is the Crucified.

Minneapolis, Minn.

#### ON THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MARTIN RADE (1857—1940)

One of the decade's major essays in the way of a critical biography of an eminent religious leader is Johannes Rathje's *Die Welt des freien Protestantismus—Ein Beitrag zur deutsch-evangelischen Geistesgeschichte dargestellt an Leben und Werk von Martin Rade* (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz-Verlag, 1952; 527 pp. plus index; cloth; DM. 36.60). The large volume fully justifies its comprehensive title, for it is really three books in one. First of all, it is a biography of a prominent Evangelical clergyman, Martin Rade. Secondly, it is the story of his very influential journal, the *Christliche Welt*, during its fifty-five-year sojourn. Finally it is also an intellectual history of modern German Evangelical Christianity as reflected in Rade's letters and the pages of his periodical.

Martin Rade, born in 1857 in Berthelsdorf near Herrnhut, was the son of a Lutheran pastor and was destined for service in the church. His home environment filled him with a basic Christian piety which, in spite of extensive intellectual meanderings, he never lost. He studied

with Adolf Harnack, then a *Dozent* at the University of Leipzig. In 1882 he took a country parish in Schoenbach in Upper Lusatia. While there, he published a three-volume popular book entitled *Martin Luthers Leben, Taten und Meinungen* (1884—87). With three friends from the Leipzig church history seminar, W. Bornemann, P. Drews, and F. Loofs, he founded the *Christliche Welt* and became its editor. It bore the interesting subtitle: *Evangelisch-lutherisches Gemeindeblatt fuer die gebildeten Glieder der evangelischen Kirchen*. In 1892 Rade accepted a call to the pulpit of St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt-am-Main. In order to gain more freedom for his writing than the parish ministry would allow, he became a *Dozent* in systematic theology at the University of Marburg in 1900, moving up the ladder to *professor ordinarius* in 1921.

The *Christliche Welt* in its attempt to interpret religious developments to the intelligent layman serves as an excellent mirror for the changing theological emphases of the period 1886 to 1941 and is exceptionally good for the decades around the turn of the century. In a treatise, *Unkonfessionalistisches Luthertum: Erinnerung an die Luthertreue in der Ritschlschen Theologie*, Rade described his position as unconfessional Lutheranism. His *Glaubenslehre*, published in three volumes, 1924—27, was heavily Ritschlian in nature. While Rade maintained his basic Christian belief and protested after forty years that his journal had not departed from its original principles, nevertheless the *Christliche Welt* shifted noticeably toward the theological left. It became a forum for the religious-historical school, alienating many former supporters, including its other three founders. Rade's apparent insensitivity to this defection poses a psychological problem which the author cannot wholly fathom. He participated in and sponsored meetings of religious liberals in Boston (1907), Berlin (1910), and Paris (1913), and arranged exchange visits with English clerics to promote mutual understanding. Many of the leading personalities of Evangelical scholarship and church life appear on the scene, often with interesting personal asides, men like Karl Holl, Ernst Troeltsch, Friedrich Heiler, Paul Tillich, and Rudolph Otto. Rade was open to any and all new ideas; only against neo-orthodoxy did he rebel. What a commentary on the changing theological current is contained in Harnack's remark to Rade on the Barthian dialectic: "I would never have thought that still another speculation could arise among us for which I possess no antennae!"

When he organized the "Society of the Friends of the *Christliche Welt*" in 1903, Rade emphasized that its purpose was to foster personal



relationships and not to serve party interests. But he hoped for too much. It was inevitable that he and his journal should become involved in all the major controversial questions of the day. Quick to defend individuals and minorities from official repression, he was often on the unpopular side of ecclesiastical and political controversies. With Friedrich Naumann, his brother-in-law, he encouraged the Christian-Socialist movement and supported the Evangelical-Socialist Congresses. He personally became a Democratic representative to the Prussian constitutional assembly, urging that "*Politik ist Christenpflicht.*" At last he had the distinction of being relieved of his office in 1933, having his house searched, and seeing his Society disbanded by the omnicompetent state. In 1941 the *Christliche Welt*, too, succumbed to a repressive edict, one year after his own death. In the great struggle between the *deutsche Christen* and the *bekennende Kirche*, neither Rade nor his editorial successor Mulert appreciated the gravity of the issues at stake. Perhaps it is not unfair to suggest that too long a schooling in theological eclecticism had weakened Rade's power to recognize and to resist even a patent and monstrous aberration.

The great age of the *Vitae Sanctorum* is over. But it is encouraging to see that the new genre of critical biography, revealing men and movements in their weaknesses as well as their strengths, may be as inspiring and certainly much more instructive. Rathje, a layman and a journalist, has contributed to the church and to history a valuable study of a churchman, a church paper, and the church today. It will take its place at the side of such biographies as *Friedrich Naumann* by Theodor Heuss, *Ernst Troeltsch* by Walther Koehler, and *Adolf Harnack* by Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, his daughter.

#### REFERENCES

On Rade, see *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart; Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, 2. Auflage, 4. Band, cols. 1678—79.

On Rathje's volume, see Heinrich Hermelink, "Die Welt des freien Protestantismus," in *Theologische Literaturzeitung; Monatschrift für das gesamte Gebiet der Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, 78. Jahrgang, Nummer 7, Juli, 1953, cols. 385—392.

Columbia, Mo.

LEWIS W. SPITZ