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Reading Programs in Theology: Forms of Church and Ministry

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FORMS OF CHURCH AND MINISTRY

ERWIN L. LUEKER

This article continues the "Reading Programs in Theology" series offered under the sponsorship of the Department of Continuing Education of Concordia Seminary. The series is designed to provide an overview of an area of theology along with a recommended bibliography. Enrollees in the program are entitled to purchase the books listed in the article from the seminary store. With some exceptions (mostly inexpensive paperbacks) the store price will represent a 15 percent discount. Orders with accompanying payments may be sent to the Seminary Store, Concordia Seminary, 801 De Mun Ave., Saint Louis, Mo. 63105. New enrollees may send the \$2.00 one-time fee to the Office of Continuing Education at the same address. The present article was prepared by Erwin Lueker, professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary.

Introduction

The study of the church can begin with almost any point of philosophy or theology. The church is Christology—Christ taking form in the world. The church is anthropology—people growing into the full stature of manhood. The church is sociology—the really beloved community forming as the body of its Lord. The church is wisdom—the pillar and ground of truth. The church is semantics—the Word taking form not in sign or sound but in flesh and blood. The church is eschatology—the little flock which has received, is receiving, and will receive the Kingdom. The church is family—a mother nourishing her children. The church is sacrament—Christ dying and rising in the world. The church is mission—sent to the world as the Father sent the Son. The church is enigma—it is holy yet always has the face of a sinner. The church is Law or Gospel—depending on which way you look. The

church is dialectics—the wisest cannot fathom its essence, yet a child knows what it is.

I. Goal

The purpose of this reading program is fourfold: (1) To help the reader see the church as a pilgrim moving toward the *eschaton* (or the body of Christ growing into all fullness) so that he is not only looking backward to the Christ who has come but also to the Christ who will come (not only to Him who is the same as yesterday, but also to Him who makes all things new tomorrow). (2) To help the reader form creative concepts of the mission of Christ's people in the world. (3) To help the reader realize that many forms and structures are present in a dynamic church. (4) To help the reader get a deeper insight into the role of the Holy Spirit, who gathers and sanctifies Christ's holy people. *Das Evangelium soll die Kirche sein.* He who does not have living faith cannot believe the church and has no hope in the world.

In two recent books this writer has used opposite approaches to the study of the church: Richard R. Caemmerer-Erwin L. Lueker, *Church and Ministry in Transition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965, \$1.00). This book begins with church and ministry in the New Testament, outlines conceptions of the church and ministry in history, and ends by focusing on contemporary situations. Erwin L. Lueker, *Change and the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969, \$3.25). This study begins with 1969 and analyzes the forms and functions of the church throughout the world and analyzes the various situations in the United States which make a uniform structure unwise or unfeasible. The problems raised by change lead to renewed studies of the Scriptures,

Confessions, and history for answers and confirmations.

II. *The Scriptures*

The material on the New Testament is so voluminous that only a few suggestions for reading can be offered. Two concise treatments: Bruce M. Metzger, "The Teaching of the New Testament Concerning the Church," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XXXIV (March 1963), 147—55; H. Grady Davis, "The Ministry in the New Testament," *The Chicago Lutheran Seminary Record*, 57, 3 (July 1952). The books mentioned in the previous section have chapters on church and ministry in the Scriptures.

H. J. Kraus, *The People of God in the Old Testament* (New York: Association Press, 1958, \$1.25). The New Testament shows a conformity with people of God (Ex. 19:6). Christians are called people of God (1 Peter 2:9), Israel of God (Gal. 6:16), Abraham's Son (Gal. 3:29; Rom. 4:16). Flock and Shepherd are used in both Testaments (John 10:1-16; Luke 12:32; Is. 40:11). Scholars have variously traced the idea of people of God to Genesis 1-11, Genesis 12, Exodus 1, or Joshua 24. The people are described as strangers and pilgrims, called into being and redeemed by the Exodus.

Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960, \$6.00). As the title indicates, this book gives insights into the nature and function of the church (e. g., assembly, people of God, body of Christ, temple of God, family of God, planting of God, household of God, flock).

Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, trans. F. Clarke (London, SCM Press, 1961, \$3.50). This book sees the structure of the church developing in the New Testament period. The books of the New Testament are analyzed individually and varying ministries compared. The problem of "charismatic" and "non-charismatic" func-

tions are analyzed. Significance of terms for the ministries especially as they relate to the priesthood of believers is discussed. The author concludes with an analysis of order as the manifestation of the Spirit, ordination, apostolic succession, worship, and conclusions.

Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, *Apostolate and Ministry*, trans. Paul D. Pahl (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969, \$4.95). Rengstorf begins by studying the New Testament apostolate and then shows what this means for the present office of the pastor. He endeavors to encourage and strengthen the pastor by directing him to the Christ who calls, sends His Spirit, and is coming again. He concludes that the office of the ministry has a special, unique character that separates it from all other offices and callings.

III. *The Church in History*

Often books on the early church deal with the structure, institutions, and ministry of the church rather than with the nature and function of the church. There are outlines of concepts of church and ministry from ancient to modern times in *Church and Ministry in Transition*. For those who read German, Ernst Kinder, *Der Evangelische Glaube und Die Kirche* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlags-haus, 1958), is excellent. It deals with such questions as the tension between theology of the church and morphology of the church, eschatological church and historical church, God's creative activity and human responsibility. The author concludes that administration of Word and Sacrament and the building of congregations are the elementary and essential empirical manifestations of the church.

The Ministry in Historical Perspectives, ed. H. R. Niebuhr and D. D. Williams (New York: Harper, 1956, \$5.00). This is still one of the best surveys of concepts of the ministry from earliest to contemporary times. It has chapters on the following periods: Primitive, Ante-Nicene, Later Patristic, Mid-

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dle Ages, Continental, Reformation, Anglican Communion, Puritan Age, American.

There are excellent studies of the doctrine of the church in the Lutheran Confessions in *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, including Arthur C. Piepkorn, "What the Symbols Have to Say About the Church," *CTM*, XXVI (October 1955), 721—63, and Herbert J. A. Bouman, "Some Thoughts on the Church in the Lutheran Symbols," *CTM*, XXXIX (March 1968), 175—93.

IV. *The Church in Mission*

Studies in this area often deal with the meaning of mission, emphasizing that it is more than verbalizing of the Gospel.

Douglas Webster, *Unchanging Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965, \$1.50). Mission is viewed in directional terms. The God-man relationship manifests itself in the structure of missions as the downward reach and the upward reach. "The Outward Thrust" and "The Inward Pull" describe the movement of mission in church-world encounter. Throughout the book emphasizes the dynamic functional character of God's mission.

Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1965, \$4.50). This is a very technical work. It traces the development of missions in the New Testament and attempts to show that thrust for Gentile missions came from the Hellenistic Jewish branch of the church.

Books dealing with missions in a specific area often emphasize the fact that the culture of the homeland from which missionaries came formed a vehicle and hindrance of the Gospel. The problems of colonialism are stressed. The correlation of church and native culture is often the central topic of study. The reader may be interested in one or more studies: *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia*, ed. Robert N. Bellah (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1965, \$6.50); Robert I. Rotberg, *Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rho-*

desia (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1965, \$6.50).

William J. Danker, *Two Worlds or None: Rediscovering Missions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964, \$4.50). Danker stresses the need for the church's involvement in the secular as well as the spiritual world and makes some concrete suggestions for a lay apostolate to be involved also in the economy of mission lands.

F. Dean Lueking, *Mission in the Making* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964, \$7.50). This is a definitive study of missions by Missouri Synod Lutherans.

Change and the Church has concise studies of structures and methods in non-Western churches.

V. *The Church in Changing Society*

Literature in this area ranges from polemical attacks on the institutional church to analysis and suggestions for ministries to specialized groups. The reader's interest determines the books selected.

David S. Schuller, *The New Urban Society* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966, \$1.00). This author analyzes the church's task in the new urban society's revolutionary impact on people, ethics, institutions, and culture. The church, he holds, must move into the market places of emerging metropolis and dialog with people there.

The Religious Situation 1969, ed. Donald R. Cutler (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, \$15.00). This volume appears annually and is reviewed at length in *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*. As its title indicates, it is not confined to Christianity. It is, however, important for those who wish to stay abreast of contemporary religious thought.

Much has been written on special areas of the church's environment and work (e.g., rural; recreation; art; labor; war; campus; movements like God-is-dead; religionless Christianity, situational ethics; civic religion; urbanization; bureaucratization; black power;

ecumenicity. Brief discussions and bibliography in *Change and the Church*).

Recent books dealing with some specific problems are Paul Bretscher, *The Holy Infection* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969, \$4.50) and David S. Schuller, *Power Structures and the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969, \$2.00).

VI. *The Future*

Because change is so rapid in a technological age, it is difficult to determine needs and patterns of the future with certainty. The following titles introduce the student to this area:

James E. Dittes, *The Church on the Way* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967,

\$6.95). This book was written to offer perspective rather than prescription. The author intends the book for ministers only and describes it as an application of psychology of religion to problems of pastoral theology. He maintains the validity and vitality of the institutional parish.

The Future of the American Church, ed. Philip J. Hefner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968, \$2.00). In this book Sidney E. Mead urges the church to negate itself and enter the mainstream of events. James M. Gustafson shows the necessity of the institutional church. Joseph Haroutunian shows the effect of democracy on American religion. Leigh D. Jordahl in the last chapter describes how Schmucker and Walther sought to Americanize the Lutheran Church.