



## "Witness to His Generation"

As these lines are being written, John A. Sauerman is being laid to rest in a small-town cemetery twenty miles from here. Who was John A. Sauerman? It would please him to know how few recognized his name and it would embarrass him to know that he was the subject of an editorial, for he was one of those Christian gentlemen of the old school who really believed that it was not only immoral but positively vulgar to do one's good works where they can be seen of men. Officially he was, for many years, the treasurer of the Lutheran University Association—an office which, until quite recently, suffered from the same lack of scope as an obstetrician in Vatican City. ... He said all of the things that he was duty bound to say. ... But then he would go on to speak, not as the man who kept the books and knew what they said, but as a Christian operating with an intuition for which there was no authority except past experience of the strange and wonderful ways in which God works when men are content to stand out of His way. And so ... John Sauerman recommended courses of action which the treasurer of the Lutheran University Association could not recommend because the man was greater than his office and his faith saw more than there was to be seen in the books.

The high regard in which we are bound to hold the professional servants of the church for their work's sake does not require us to ascribe to them an

omnicompetence which they do not possess. ... We are all ignorant—but about different things. In our experience, clergymen know next to nothing about sciences, most of them are pathetically naïve about politics, and few of them have any real understanding of literature or the arts. The vast majority of them are but indifferent theologians. And we say this with no intent to degrade either their persons or their offices. ... The point that we are trying to make is that the total mission of the church requires the full use of that diversity of gifts which God has spread across its membership.

The arrogant language of our quarrels masks, more often than not, our fears that God may not be able to speak to us in any other idiom, verbal or musical, than the idiom which He employed in speaking to our fathers. And so, irrespective of what we should or should not expect of our church musicians, the fact of the matter is that we expect them to speak with the old familiar language of the chorale and the English anthem, the Gospel hymn and the liturgy of the blue hymnal. And we want these played on the pipe-organ—full organ in the case of “A Mighty Fortress” and the gutsier hymns, vibrato and chimes in the case of “Jesus, Lover of My Soul” and other “soulful” hymns. The choir, for many of us, is a problem. On the one hand, what is a church without a choir? On the other hand, the “choir selection” tends to lengthen the service and, too often, to introduce into it an element of the unfamiliar which makes us uneasy. All in all, we feel most comfortable with the children’s choir from the school, which can usually be counted on to do something simple, familiar and short. If the adult choir must perform (that is the word we use), we like it best if it does one of the old standbys—the “Hallelujah Chorus” at Easter, “Silent Night” at Christmas.

In the present tumult of the younger generation the church can, if it sensitive to the voice of its Master, hear a new call to battle. A young, bearded (!) Gallilean is shouting: “Look, I didn’t come to bring peace but a sword.” It’s all in the Bible which is being scrutinized word by word to see whether it allows Missouri Lutherans and American Lutherans to participate in love-ins (agape meals) at the Lord’s altar. If the call goes unheeded by the organized institutional church, it will create new forms, new associations, new fellowships which will respond and act. For the word does not return void. It accomplishes what it pleases. That, too, is in the Bible, and it was written for our warning, upon whom the end of an age has come.

Finally, we do not need any more misleading clichés like Professor Galbraith’s “Affluent Society.” Ours is not an affluent society; it is an unjust society. The wealth produced by our land and our industries is distributed neither on the basis of merit nor of need. Children go hungry in our slums while pop singers become millionaires. We have a screwed-up set of values which produces a destructive boredom at the top of the economic ladder and crushing despair at the bottom of the ladder. And in the middle there is a scramble for the next rung which benefits nobody except the manufacturer of tranquillizers.

The saints of God come in all sizes and shapes. There are praying saints and working saints, silent saints and shouting saints, gentle saints and tough saints, kindly saint and irascible saints, naïve saints and wily saints. But they all have at least one thing in common: they are their own men because they are first, fully, and finally God’s men. Konrad Adenauer was, in many ways, the direct antithesis of any decent humanist’s stereotype of a saint. He was austere, tough, wily, stubborn, a man who understood and used power. He was a humble man, but not modest; a

good man, but not very nice. ... When he died last April 19, the whole world knew that one of the three of four great national leaders of the century had been taken away from it, but there were few who could feel his loss as personally as most of us felt the loss of F.D.R. and Churchill.