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This informal newsletter is sent out occasionally to Lutheran ministers in Great Britain by Rev'd Dr Roy Long. It reviews and recommends books that they might enjoy reading. Dr Long can be contacted by telephone on 01604-891383, or by e-mail at roy.long485@btinternet.com.

STARTING ON A PERSONAL NOTE

I hope that I shall be forgiven for starting this edition of LIBER on a very personal note, but on Reformation Day of this year I shall remember the 50th anniversary of my Ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. This took place in St Paul's Lutheran Church, Corby, on the afternoon of Saturday 31 October 1970 in a service presided over by the Chairman of the United Lutheran Synod, Rev'd Robert Patkai, and in which pastors of American, English, Estonian, Finnish, German, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Polish background participated. I had spent six of the preceding seven years studying. The first three of these years (1963-1966) were spent in Nottingham College of Education studying to be a primary teacher, specialising in Divinity and English, as well as studies in the philosophy and practice of Education. My studies in Divinity gave me a very solid foundation of biblical studies and church history and the dissertation that I had to write saw me venturing for the first time into the field of Luther Studies with a paper entitled "Luther's Understanding of the Word of God". The three years from 1967 to 1970 were spent in Mansfield College, Oxford, which then had a Lutheran tutorship, and where I became more fully acquainted with Lutheran theology, as well as with Patristics and with further biblical studies. I think that I was well grounded in academic terms when I came to my Ordination, though deficient in pastoral studies, which should have occurred in a fourth year of studies in Mansfield, but which I was not able to have. My career since Ordination has not been as I expected. Looking back, I assumed that I would spend my years in parish ministry, but I was the first pastor in the United Synod to do secular work alongside pastoral work. In my case I worked consecutively in two secondary schools in Corby, eventually giving up parish work so that I could do more academic study – first an M.Phil. on Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology (1984), and then a Ph.D. on aspects of Jewish and Islamic Education (1994). By 1984 I had moved from teaching to being one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education, eventually specialising in Jewish and Evangelical Christian education. This was my life up to my retirement, and although I often felt that I was not helping the Lutheran Church in Great Britain as much as I should, I realised that I was making a very specific ecumenical contribution to the world of education. After retirement, I have been able to indulge my passion for Lutheran history in Great Britain and Ireland, and I anticipate continuing this study in whatever years there are left to me. It only remains for me to thank all those – too numerous to mention – who have supported my diverse ministry over the years. Once again, forgive this personal excursus. I hope that you enjoy reading LIBER, and that you find it interesting.

EXPLORING GERMAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

One of the three books reviewed in the last edition of LIBER was Dr Neil MacGregor's **Living with the Gods: On beliefs and peoples**, and I am starting this edition by looking at another of Dr MacGregor's books, **Germany: Memories of a Nation** (London, Allan Lane, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-141-00833-1). This is another handsomely produced and well-illustrated book, rich with quotations from many experts on different aspects of German history and culture. The book is the third part of a project bearing the same title and consisting of a temporary exhibition at the British Museum in 2014-15 and a radio series developed by BBC Radio 4 and the Museum. These "... set out to look at Germany's challenging history from the standpoint of the new Germany created after the fall of the Berlin Wall." (p.588). The book was actually published in time for the 25th anniversary of the wall coming down.

There are thirty chapters, divided into six sections: Where is Germany?; Imagining Germany; The Persistent Past; Made in Germany; The Descent; and Living with History: like **Living with the Gods**, this is a book that readers can dip in and out of, and the cross referencing between chapters is generally very good. I was particularly drawn to two chapters: Chapter 6, entitled “A Language for all Germans”, which looks at Luther’s distinct contribution to the development of modern German, and Chapter 13, which is entitled “The Baltic Brothers”, and which looks at the Hanseatic League.

As is only to be expected in a work on Germany, there are scattered references to Luther throughout the book, but Chapter 6 is almost completely devoted to him and, in particular, his contribution to the development of the German language. The Germany of Luther’s day was a patchwork of many states and statelets stretching from the Baltic to the Alps and from the Spanish Netherlands across to the border with Poland. These territories made up the Holy Roman Empire and were predominantly German-speaking, though the German that was spoken varied so much that many dialects were mutually unintelligible. Luther’s protest against what he considered to be the failings of the contemporary church meant that the rulers of individual territories had to choose whether they would follow the old or new understandings of the faith. Luther, says Dr MacGregor, can thus be called the divider of an already much divided Germany, but, on the other hand, and paradoxically, he can be seen as its unifier. Dr MacGregor can make this claim because of Luther’s work in unifying the German language and giving it a common grammar and vocabulary, based on the language of his native Saxony. Dr MacGregor quotes the novelist Thomas Mann, who in 1945 addressed the US Library of Congress with these words: “*Although I am an American citizen, I have remained a German writer, faithful to the German language, which, for me, is my true homeland*” (p.91). Mann almost seems to be saying that to be truly German is to have the German language rather than a specific nationality. The medium for Luther’s linguistic work was, of course, his translation of the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek, which he achieved, not by slavishly following the Vulgate version (others had done that with results that could only be described as pedestrian), but through his ability to connect with the ordinary, day-to-day, living language of ordinary people. In this way, Luther made the Scriptures come alive for such people, in much the same way that William Tyndale was to do with his English translation. Interestingly, Dr MacGregor draws attention to the fact that the British Library has two copies of the Luther Bible in its collection, both of them with inscriptions in the reformer’s own hand.

As someone with a strong interest in British Lutheran history, I found Chapter 13, “The Baltic Brothers”, also of particular interest. This chapter concentrates on the merchants of the Hanseatic League, a medieval phenomenon which lasted down to the closing decades of the 17th century. The League, which was remarkably lacking in much in the way of formal bureaucracy, was a trading alliance based on the Baltic and the North Sea, but extending across to Russia and down into southern Germany. The League has trading centres in London, King’s Lynn, and other places in the eastern part of England, and its centre in London, the so-called “Steelyard”, played a role in being a channel through which Luther’s works entered this country illegally. A most readable chapter, and one which serves to remind British Lutherans of an interesting period of their history.

It is worthwhile following the other references to Luther throughout the book, and in this way I was also interested to read Chapter 9 (pp.152-1) “Hall of Heroes”, which described Valhalla, the classical building devoted to great Germans constructed by King Ludwig of Bavaria. Being a staunch Roman Catholic, Ludwig omitted a bust of Luther, which was only added after the king’s downfall in 1848. Overall, an excellent book and highly recommended.

HOW DO WE LOOK – THE EYE OF FAITH

Dr Mary Beard is a Fellow of Newnham College, Cambridge, and Professor of Classics in the university. She is also Classics Editor of the Times Literary Supplement. Dr Beard has not confined herself to the ivory tower of academia, but is now more widely known because of her historical programmes on television. She has never been afraid to express controversial views and over the years has been on the receiving end of a great deal of criticism. She has over a dozen books to her credit, as well as dozens of articles.

How do we look: The Eye of Faith (London, Profile Books Ltd., 2018. ISBN: 978-1-78125-9993)

is based on two episodes of the television programme “Civilisations”, an updated version of Kenneth Clark’s 1969 series of the same name. The book is divided into two parts. In the first, “How do we look”, Dr Beard looks at the interrelationship between the self-understanding of human beings and the way in which they have been portrayed throughout history. In Part II, “The Eye of Faith”, she examines the relationship between art and religion, and how, throughout the centuries, religion has influenced artistic expression. This book makes for a good read and is heartily recommended to potential readers.

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