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Ulrich Leopold

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Peering out at all passers-by from the portrait gallery of past Seminary deans in the hallway beside the chapel at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary is one Ulrich Siegfried Leupold (1909-70). In the preparatory work for a forthcoming monograph on European musicians who fled Germany prior to and shortly after World war II, I feel that I was able to learn something about this remarkable musician, theologian, and pastor, who played an important role in the education of several generations of clergy and laity and who also brought to North American religious communities a knowledge of the rich musical traditions of Continental European composers. How did someone who began his career as a musicologist in Berlin, Germany in the 1930s end up in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada as Dean of a Lutheran Seminary?

Leupold's father, Anton Wilhelm (1868-1940), was organist at the Sankt Petri church, Berlin,¹ and was the first organist to perform Max Reger's entire organ works in Berlin.² His mother Gertrud, née Igel, was an opera singer. Leupold completed his "Abitur" at the Hohenzollern Gymnasium, (Berlin-Schöneberg) in 1927, then began his musicological studies at the Friedrich Wilhelms University (1927-34). His teachers there comprised the leading edge of German musicologists – Georg Schünemann, Johannes Wolf, Arnold Schering, Curt Sachs, and Eric Hornbostel. In 1929 he also began theological studies at the University of Zürich. At the age of 23, he was the youngest doctoral graduate in the university with his 1932 thesis on liturgical chant in the Lutheran Church during the Enlightenment and Romantic Eras.³ Hans Joachim Moser, later to distinguish himself with studies on Lutheran Church music, and Heinrich Schütz sat on his committee and praised the work.

Leupold seemed destined for a brilliant career in the German academic world but everything was to change with the accession to power of the National Socialists in January 1933. In April of that year,

race laws were promulgated by the National Socialists, barring non-Aryans from holding any public office. Since Leupold's mother was Jewish and an opera singer, she was now "on the list" of persons to be arrested. Warned by her landlady that while she had attended church the Gestapo had come looking for her, she immediately went into hiding and remained so for the duration of the war. An aunt of Leupold, not so fortunate, was deported to Auschwitz and perished there.

Leupold also exposed himself to authorities by becoming a member of the "Bekennende Kirche," the Confessing Church. He was thus in the bizarre situation of being doubly at risk both because he was Jewish (on racial grounds) and because he was Christian (on grounds of religious conviction)! He joined one of the five seminaries of the Confessing Church in 1935 which, through its confession of faith, *The Barmen Declaration* of May, 1934, had set itself in direct opposition to the officially-sanctioned German Lutheran Church ("Reichskirche") and was, from the outset, subject to increasing persecution. Ulrich would have been unable to be ordained in the German Christian Church because the Church Synod had accepted the 7 April civil service law which "provided for the ordination only of persons of Aryan descent".⁴ Already in April 1933 Dietrich Bonhoeffer had viewed the "Aryan paragraphs" as a touchstone of the Church's validity: if the state was justified in this unwarranted and illegitimate intrusion into Church polity, when racial pedigree was the sole determinant of religious conviction, then the Church had no credibility; political opposition was thus the only ethically justifiable position for a believing Christian.⁵

Eberhard Bethge's biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer deals with the Confessing Church's seminary education,⁶ and through this work it is possible to imagine what Leupold experienced during the years 1935-7. Seminaries were instituted with approximately 100 students. Bonhoeffer led the Pomeranian seminary (attended by Bethge), while others were held in Elberfeld, East Prussia and Silesia. Because of their quasi-legal status, they enjoyed a certain amount of flexibility in their early stages. Classrooms and curricula were improvised. One rule alone was kept: no one was allowed to talk about a person in his/her absence, or when this was done, the affected person was to be told. Leupold distributed pamphlets about the meetings. Bethge recounts how the authorities gradually subjected the seminaries to increasingly onerous restrictions, so that they ultimately closed on 1 July 1937.⁷

Meanwhile the Gestapo had searched Leopold's apartment but did not find anything incriminating. By the time Leopold's name appeared in print in Germany in the odious *Lexikon der Juden*, a "black list" of all those who had been determined to be Jewish and a certain death sentence for all those remaining in Germany, he was safely in Waterloo.⁸ Leopold himself was very tight-lipped about this period of his life, even to his wife, Gertrude, probably because it was a very painful experience. "We don't go back, we go forward" was his terse summary of that time and what little information we have about Leopold's activities during the period came from his mother who visited the couple in Canada after the war.

Leopold went first to England in 1938, initially one of the most welcoming countries for Germans fleeing the National Socialist menace. Later that year, Fred Otto, a pastor from Toledo, Ohio whom Leopold had met in Berlin when Otto had studied music and attended his father's organ concerts, invited Leopold to come to Fremont, Ohio. From Leopold's widow we learned that

Pastor Otto sponsored his emigration. He got a job in Toledo playing the organ in Augsburg Lutheran Church. Dr Myle, the president of the Ohio Synod, wrote to Dr Schmieder, my pastor in St Matthew's, 'Since you still have German services, could you use Rick?' I remember Dr Schmieder telling the congregation about this. So Rick came from Toledo to St Matthew's. We opened the job for him because we had an organist, and we also had a pastor, but it was a large congregation and Dr Schmieder was alone. So Rick came as his assistant.⁹

Later he was ordained. Following the example of his father, Leopold had become an accomplished organist so that, as theologian, musicologist, and performer he was uniquely equipped for anything which Canada could throw at him.

Soon Leopold began to teach church music courses at the Waterloo College of Arts, and Greek and New Testament theology at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary (later Waterloo Lutheran University in 1959 and Sir Wilfrid Laurier University in 1973) bringing his theological, musicological, and pastoral talents to the stronghold of Canadian Lutheranism. He was a perfect match for the intellectual and spiritual life of Waterloo, becoming an integral part of the academic and administrative life of the university.

A veritable stream of articles and essays on the relation of music and liturgy flowed from his pen, drawing on his extensive

musicological and theological studies at the University of Berlin and the University of Zurich. His column in the *Canada Lutheran*, “Musical Echoes,” dedicated to musical and theological topics, appeared monthly from 1941 to 1947 and sporadically until 1968. He appealed to pastors and congregations not to succumb to the lowest common denominator in church music but to draw on the rich heritage of music-liturgical material available. He was also very active as an organist, performing frequently as well as acting as a consultant for the design and purchase of organs for other congregations.

In 1945 “Leupold introduced the first music course at the Seminary and began a Church Music program leading to a certificate in Sacred Music. This program and the music courses in the Faculty of Arts and Science were to form the basis for the Faculty of Music.”¹⁰ He encouraged Walter Kemp, whom he met in England, to come to Waterloo Lutheran in 1965 in order to set up the campus music department in Waterloo.¹¹ Kemp was later to acknowledge Leupold as the “foremost church musician in Canadian Lutheranism.”¹² Leupold was also instrumental in convincing Elmer Iseler to study music seriously. Iseler had begun studies at Waterloo College as an English major and was in Leupold’s choir. Leupold’s opinion was that Iseler was in the wrong faculty and “should be studying music.” The two musicians visited each other quite often since Leupold had an apartment close to the university. Leupold was able to convince Iseler’s parents (his father was a pastor in Preston) to allow Elmer to study music in Toronto, necessitating a move away from home.¹³ Iseler subsequently became one of Canada’s foremost choral conductors.

Leupold served on numerous Lutheran and Lutheran-Catholic councils promoting and contributing to new service books, co-editing the 1958 *Service Book and Hymnal* (“red book”) and a work of hymnody which was to occupy him in the final years of his life, *Laudamus*, edited for the Lutheran World Federation.¹⁴ His translation of Luther’s writings on liturgy and hymns appeared in the collected works of Luther.¹⁵ One of his hymns, “Er ist erstanden, Halleluja” was recently published in the *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, the German-wide revised Lutheran hymn book.¹⁶

Leupold’s administrative duties began in earnest when he was appointed Dean of the Seminary in 1945. In 1968 this position was coupled with that of principal which he held until his death, from Lou Gehrig’s disease, in June 1970. Leupold was able to marry many

disciplines – musicology, theology, and music performance – in his pastoral, academic, and administrative duties in a Christ-centered symbiosis, a truly remarkable achievement.

Notes

- 1 The church was badly damaged by bombs during the war. After the war Leopold went to Berlin and visited the church; it was later torn down.
- 2 *Mitteilungen des Max-Reger-Instituts, Bonn, 51 Heft* (April, 1957): 5.
- 3 *Die liturgischen Gesänge der evangelischen Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung und der Romantik* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1933).
- 4 Hubert G. Locke, Ed., *Exile in the Fatherland: Martin Niemöller's Letters from Prison* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), p. 7.
- 5 Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologe; Christ; Zeitgenosse* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1967), pp. 321-6.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 481-662.
- 7 *Illegale Theologenausbildung: Finkenwalde 1935-1937* edited by Otto Dudzus, 1996; *Sammelvikariat 1937-1940*, edited by Dirk Schulz, 1998. Leopold's name does not appear on any of the above lists of students who registered for the vicariat. This does not however mean that he was not enrolled, since the lists are not complete.
- 8 *Eva Weissweiler in Ausgemertzt! Das Lexikon der Juden in der Musik und seine mörderischen Folgen* (Cologne: Dittrich, 1999), traces the names of those who appeared in Stengel's publication and compared this with the list of death camp victims: the similarities are astounding.
- 9 Leopold entered Canada under Order-in-Council P.C.722, no. 139, 29 March 1939: "Ulrich Leopold, aged 30 years, presently residing in Toledo, Ohio ...intended occupation – assistant pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Kitchener."
- 10 Flora Roy, *Sir Wilfred Laurier Faculty of Music Newsletter*, Summer, 1999, p. 6.
- 11 EMC 679a, b: "In 1965 he accepted the first full-time music appointment at Waterloo Lutheran U[niversity], and was founder-chairman of its music department 1967-76. From 1965 to 1976 he led the university choir."
- 12 EMC 781b.
- 13 Interview with Gertrude Leopold, 5 October 2002.

- 14 Ulrich Leupold, Ed. *Laudamus: Hymnal for the Lutheran World Federation, 4th ed.* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1970).
- 15 *Luther's Works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965).
- 16 *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Evangelische Landeskirche Anhalts Die Evangelische Kirche in Berlin-Brandenburg...* (Stuttgart: Biblia, 1994, no. 116). Each of the provinces of Germany published its own version of the hymn book and all included this text, translated by Leupold from the Swahili song “Mfurahini, Haleluya” from Tanzania. The short biography given on p. 1593 of the Wurttemberg edition lists Leupolds’ directorship at the Lutheran Seminary in Waterloo USA [sic.] “Professor für Neues Testament und Kirchenmusik und Direktor am lutherischen Seminar in Waterloo (USA.)”