

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION *

Johann Friedrich Oberlin "A scholarly investigation of his thinking, his education and his influence upon the world, with a short biography," by Horand K. Gutfeldt. Accepted in June 1968 at the University of Vienna, Austria.

The author's interest was attracted to the person and life of the Alsatian minister, educator and man of action Oberlin (1740-1826). In a comprehensive bibliographical research the author examined over 400 books and articles about Oberlin published in Germany, France, the USA, England, Holland, Norway, Switzerland, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, China, Japan and Madagascar. Among the scholarly studies, Dr. Gutfeldt's investigation presents the most complete systematization of Oberlin's thought.

Oberlin brought some of the highest ideals of Christianity into a profound harmony with philosophy and education. He founded a number of schools, trained the teachers and introduced a number of social improvements. He also founded agricultural cooperatives, a cooperative bank, a library and a science museum, and he organized and participated physically in the building of streets and bridges. Long before Froebel he established the first kindergartens in the world. Here, the educational principles were from the beginning more advanced than those of Froebel. Oberlin also organized a students' government and a program of adult education, and developed a system of teaching by practical examples and learning by doing.

Oberlin's educational policies transformed one of the most backward mountain areas of Europe, racked by famine and disease, into what was probably the most advanced rural region at that time. His schools taught two languages, French and German, and, besides an outstanding science program, incorporated a unique ethical education that had a deep impact upon the parish. Among the subjects appearing on the assignments for the first grade in elementary school were: "The Soul and its qualities," and "How to change bad habits and to acquire good ones."

At the end of Oberlin's ministry, no dogs were kept, no doors were locked, and persecuted people found refuge and protection in his district. No orphanage was necessary, because many

* The summary was supplied by the author of the dissertation, Horand K. Gutfeldt, Ph.D.

families volunteered to adopt children.

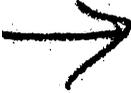
Oberlin's progressive religious views were ecumenical and led him to rename his church "Evangelical-Catholic," because it combined Protestantism with aspects of Catholicism.

People came from several parts of Europe to study Oberlin's methods. Among them were the utopian socialist Robert Owen from England, the Baroness Kruedener (advisor of Tsar Alexander I of Russia), and many others. Some of Oberlin's influence reached America through Oberlin College, but there are also two other settlements in the United States that carry his name.

Because of his accomplishments, some saw Oberlin as a man of practical success. Others saw him mainly as a man of Christian charity. The author demonstrates beyond any doubt that Oberlin had earned a doctorate in philosophy and that his accomplishments were based upon a complex of forward-looking theories and ideas. His psychology appears especially noteworthy, showing a thorough acquaintance with, and influence from, the works of Emanuel Swedenborg. (See the author's article "Oberlin and Swédenborg" in *New Church Magazine*, London 1966/67.) The unifying concept of Oberlin's thought and work is his concept of love, which combines theology, philosophy, and psychology as the noblest elements of the human soul.

COMMUNICATIONS

To the Editor of THE NEW PHILOSOPHY:

 I wish to thank you for publishing "The Antediluvians and the Most Ancient Church" by Thomas W. Keiser (THE NEW PHILOSOPHY, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 4, pp. 303-308). It is a valuable addition to the literature in the field of New Church anthropology. As a student it is quite pleasing to read the work of one so obviously qualified as Dr. Keiser.

Keiser has made an important contribution to the study of the Most Ancient Church, especially in that he has pointed out that the term *most ancient people* is not entirely synonymous with the term *Most Ancient Church*. The difference between them has impressed me, although I have conceived of it as a temporal rather than geographic distinction. Keiser's observation and delineation of the distinction will lead, I believe, to clearer thought on the subject in the future. Because of the importance of this distinction, I beg leave to contribute a few more observations.

The term *most ancient* is simply an adjective referring to the earliest times. That it is not a specific term as is the term *Most Ancient Church* is suggested by the fact that *most ancient* when applied to people (in the latin this is done simply by using the adjective as a substantive), to times, or to a style of the Word, is not capitalized as it is when applied to the