

4-1-1935

## Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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### Recommended Citation

Kretzmann, P. E. (1935) "Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 6 , Article 36.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol6/iss1/36>

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**Theological Observer. — Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches.**


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**I. Amerika.**

Aus der Synode. Aus den letzten Nummern der verschiedenen Distriktsblätter ist ersichtlich, daß das Werk des Herrn im vergangenen Jahre mit größerem Eifer und Erfolg betrieben worden ist. Das geht nicht nur hervor aus der Tatsache, daß man überall mit allem Ernst neue Missionen eröffnet, sondern auch daraus, daß eine ganze Anzahl der Distrikte ihren Teil der Gelder für das Werk der Synode aufgebracht haben. Einige, wie der Colorado-Distrikt, der Oklahoma-Distrikt und der Mittlere Distrikt, haben sogar die ihnen zugewiesene Summe überschritten, so daß der Kassierer der Synode wenigstens einen Teil der Synodalschuld abtragen konnte. Wenn der Herr der Kirche weiter Kraft und Mut gibt, wird die Arbeit der Kirche ihren ruhigen Fortgang nehmen, ja ohne Zweifel wachsen und gedeihen. — Die Zahl der Gemeinden, auch hier im mittleren Westen, die ihr fünfundsiebzigjähriges Jubiläum feiern, mehrt sich. Die Gemeinde zu Rhineland, Ontario, konnte sogar schon das Jubiläum ihres achtzigjährigen Bestehens feiern. Aber auch aus andern Distrikten kommen Nachrichten von derartigen Festfeiern. Die Bilder und die Gemeindegeschichten, die sich in den verschiedenen Distriktsblättern finden, sind von großem Wert, nicht nur für die jetzige Generation, sondern auch für künftige Zeiten. Wenn Material dieser Art, das geschichtlichen Wert hat, auch an das Archiv unserer historischen Gesellschaft gesandt wird, so wird es für den Kirchengeschichtsschreiber von großem Wert sein. — Daß die Brüder in Südamerika in zielbewußter, aggressiver Weise arbeiten, geht aus jeder Nummer der beiden dort herausgegebenen kirchlichen Zeitschriften hervor. Da findet sich nicht nur interessante kirchliche Zeitgeschichte, sondern auch reichlich Material an Lehre und Lehre. Das „Ev.-Luth. Kirchenblatt für Südamerika“ erscheint seit dem 1. Januar dieses Jahres mit einem neuen Titelblatt in modernem Festdruck. — Die Fremdsprachige Mission inmitten des Atlantischen Distrikts zeigt schöne Fortschritte unter den Slowaken, den Letten, den Litauern, den Italienern und den Juden, wozu noch die Arbeit der Inneren Mission (im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes) in der Großstadt New York kommt. Dieses ganze Werk wird von der Synode unterstützt und kostet etwa \$14,000 jährlich.

P. C. R.

**The National Lutheran Council Holds Its Election and Issues Pronouncements on War and Movies.** — When the National Lutheran Council met in New York City January 17 and 18, it was found that of its twenty-two commissioners nineteen were in attendance. A report says: “The former officers were reelected: President, C. C. Hein, D. D., Columbus, O.; Vice-President, N. C. Carlsen, D. D., Blair, Nebr.; Secretary, M. R. Hamsher, D. D., Mechanicsburg, Pa.; Treasurer, the Hon. E. F. Eilert, New York City. The latter officer enjoys the honor of having served continuously since the organization of the council in 1918. Those who will serve as the additional members of the executive committee are the Rev. Drs. J. A. Aasgard, T. O. Burntvedt, G. A. Brandelle, E. B. Burgess, and E. H. Rausch.” We submit here, in the first place, the resolutions pertaining to war that were adopted: —



"I. The Lutheran Church is against everything that breeds war. War is the logical consequence of selfishness and greed and must be stopped at its source. Resolutions and agitation against war are futile so long as we want to be the beneficiaries of that which causes war. What a man sows, that shall he reap, is not simply a discovery of science. It is a declaration of eternal truth by God Himself.

"II. Lasting peace is only possible if it is a peace with purpose. Without purpose it only furnishes added opportunity for that which causes war. The glory of God and the good of man are the prerequisites for enduring peace on earth.

"III. The National Lutheran Council calls upon the nation to rededicate itself to the elimination of the causes of war within the nation and among the nations of the world and the establishment of these high purposes of enduring peace. Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.

"The National Lutheran Council calls upon its constituency to work and pray for this consummation.

"IV. Our Government is the guardian of the rights and liberties of its citizens and as such must take the steps to protect these rights and liberties which sound judgment and high purpose dictate. No steps should be taken which lead to war or preparation for war which are the result of selfishness or greed and the desire for profit on the part of the nation or groups or individuals or which come from propaganda founded on falsehoods and undue emphasis of partial truths. The Government in the exercise of its duties and responsibilities must seek to avoid requiring of its citizens violation of conscientious scruples. Individual citizens and groups must not hamper or handicap the Government in the enforcement and maintenance of that which is essential to the life and existence of the nation."

Needless to say, we are in entire sympathy with the objectives of this declaration. But a resolution which appears not entirely proper is No. III. These Lutheran commissioners are indeed within their rights when they say: "The National Lutheran Council calls upon its constituency to work and pray for this consummation"; but when the Council "calls upon the nation to rededicate itself to the elimination of the causes of war," concluding this exhortation with a Scripture-passage, one feels that it lays itself open to the charge of endeavoring to influence people by the Word without having laid the foundation through the preaching of repentance and faith. The Reformed have always been committing this mistake, and Lutherans should avoid it.

Quite commendable and certain of receiving the endorsement of all people for whom the Ten Commandments are still in force are the resolutions of the National Lutheran Council on the moving-picture menace. On account of their timeliness we reprint them here in full:—

"During the past year a great campaign for cleaner motion-pictures has been waged. Voices of protest were raised in many quarters against what was held to be the corrupting influences of many of the pictures. A wave of moral indignation swept over the land. The outraged moral sense of Christian people expressed itself in no uncertain terms.



"Motion-pictures might be at all times, and often are, legitimate entertainment as well as an important educational factor. Their influence can be wholesome and salutary. They have great potential value for society. But at the present time many pictures stand charged with serious offenses against decency and morality.

"The public has a right to demand that those who are the players in the pictures shall live lives that conform to the decent standards of society. But at the present time it seems that the producers seek to capitalize on the scandals in the lives of their so-called stars.

"Newspapers and other publications bear a part of the blame for the corruption of morals which is going on through degrading pictures. Often favorable reviews are given of unwholesome pictures, and advertising columns are filled with highly suggestive copy. Bill-boards in theater entrances contain similar advertising material which is an offense to morality.

"The tremendous responsibility of producers and all who have anything to do with the presentation of degrading motion-pictures becomes evident when we consider that approximately twenty-eight million minors visit the movies every week. Of these, eleven million are below thirteen years of age. What a betrayal of trust to present before these vulgarity, brutality, underworld scenes and practises, nudity, illicit love, and a false and distorted view of life! 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.'

"We deplore the sad state of affairs which a study of moving pictures reveals and the flagrant breach of trust on the part of those who are responsible. We rejoice in the emphatic, though long overdue, protest against these conditions which has been made in recent months. We cherish the hope that this is not a burst of indignation which soon will spend its force, but that it marks the beginning of a long-time effort and continued vigilance. Believing that the aroused Christian sentiment of the nation will prove itself a force which no group can defy or ignore indefinitely, we pledge our full support to the movement for the renovation of the movies.

"We appeal to our Lutheran people to withhold their patronage from all motion-pictures which have a degrading influence and are a menace to home, church, and country.

"We call upon them to make their influence felt in creating a public opinion which will demand the suppression of that which corrupts and distorts life.

"We hold that as citizens they must bring pressure to bear to secure legislation which will deal with the evil at its source, that is, where the pictures are made.

"We condemn as an unmitigated evil the present system of enforced block-booking and blind-buying.

"In the final analysis the Gospel is the only real remedy for every social evil. When men have in their hearts the love of God, who loved us first, they experience the expulsive power of this new affection. With this holy love in their souls, they will neither participate in making, or have the desire to witness, soul-destroying pictures. Therefore the first duty of



the Church also in this situation is to 'preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine,' 2 Tim. 4, 2."

From the report in the *N. L. C. News Bulletin* we take over a few more interesting items: "Relations with the Lutheran World Convention were studied and clarified. Time and prayerful attention were given to the present pitiful plight of the German missionary societies' various stations in China, India, and Africa caused by the economic crises in Germany. [The cause of the difficulties appear to be the policy of Germany not to permit money to go abroad. It seems that this policy is so comprehensive that even sums given for charitable and religious purposes are, as a rule, not allowed to leave the country. One report says that in November only about \$3,500 was sent the German mission-stations from Germany itself.—A.] Attention was called to the fact that the new *Webster International Dictionary*, despite the efforts of Dr. George Linn Kieffer to make it possible to give a reliable and accurate statement under the word *Lutheran*, still contains a statement utterly misleading. The council's secretary will address a protest to the editor, and our Lutheran editors will be asked to call the attention of our people to the matter."

A.

**Committee of the U. L. C. for Negotiations with Other Lutheran Bodies.**—From the *Lutheran* we learn that, in keeping with the resolution passed by the Savannah convention of the U. L. C., a committee which is to carry on negotiations with other Lutheran general bodies in order to establish unity has been appointed. It consists of the following members: Dr. F. H. Knubel, President of the U. L. C.; Dr. H. H. Bagger, President of the Pittsburgh Synod; Dr. C. M. Jacobs, President of the theological seminary in Philadelphia; Dr. John F. Krueger, Professor at Hamma Divinity School, Springfield, O.; Mr. E. F. Eilert, a publisher, for many years member of the U. L. C. Board of Publication; Mr. E. Clarence Miller, Treasurer of the U. L. C.; Mr. J. K. Jensen of Wisconsin, Treasurer of the Synod of the Northwest; and Mr. Edward Rinderknecht of Toledo, O. The *Lutheran* is right when it says, "The work assigned these Commissioners on Lutheran Church Relationships is of supreme importance."

A.

**Discussion about the Effectiveness of Sunday-Schools.**—In the *Christian Century* an article appeared which advocates the discontinuance of the present Sunday-school system and urges that parents be held responsible for the religious training of their children. The article provoked a great deal of discussion, and the *Christian Century* of February 13 prints a number of letters which relate to this issue. Some correspondents disagree with the article in question. Others, however, are quite emphatic in endorsing it. There is one letter parts of which we feel we ought to quote because it is to be feared that the situation it depicts is more general than one would like to believe. Writing from a city in the Middle West, this correspondent says: "I have been for a number of years interested in the work of the Sunday-school. However, of late years, and especially the last few months, I have felt that this work in practically all its phases has been clearly a case of love's labor lost. I might cite as an instance of this what I have observed as the result of teaching a class of girls this fall and winter. These girls are about twelve years of age, have



been regular in their attendance at Sunday-school for years, and come from the best families in the city. Their attitude during the worship service is that of indifference or forced attention, and during the class period they are rude, bossy, and impertinent among themselves and to their teacher. In quizzing them one Sunday about the life of Christ, I discovered that they did not know even the main facts of His life. They thought He was born in Jerusalem. They knew nothing of the story of the flight to Egypt. His visit to the Temple at the age of twelve was very hazy. One girl volunteered that He was baptized by John the Baptist, but where and under what conditions they did not know; nor did they know who John the Baptist was. They ridiculed the miraculous power that the Bible has attributed to Christ, and they showed throughout the lesson that they were unconcerned about His life and His teaching and even out of sympathy with His acts. They were scornful because He was so 'dumb' as to let Himself be crucified, when it would have been so easy for Him to have saved His life and escaped from the hands of His enemies. In regard to character development I cannot see that our Sunday-school has made much progress. In discussing the moral question involved in regard to cheating in their school-work, they were emphatic in their belief that it was all right 'if you could get away with it.' When I suggested that they substitute money in place of knowledge, they expressed the opinion that it would be wrong to take the money because 'money was of more value than knowledge.' In referring to one's conscience, one pupil, in a very boastful way, said that she had no conscience and laughed at one of the other pupils when she admitted that she thought she had. At one of the sessions, in a talk about prayer, they brushed the topic aside. Most of them volunteered that they never said any prayers. One girl admitted that she did, but it was because her grandmother made her."

While we must all remember that it would be wrong for us to think that all Sunday-schools may find their description in this gloomy letter, we should not close our eyes to the fact that many serious-minded fellow-citizens outside of our own communion realize the inadequacy of the religious training given by the average Sunday-school. A.

Father Divine is a New York Negro who speaks, brokenly, the jargon of theosophy and promises his followers, his worshipers, all material and spiritual wealth and numbers among his adherents, as Rev. W. Behrends of Long Beach, Cal., states, not only Negroes, but also whites. This body should be listed, perhaps, on page 475 of *Popular Symbolics* as True Idea Association. That seems to be its official name. Its organ, the *Light*, says (September 14, 1934): "The message in this issue will be read by nearly a hundred thousand happy and enthusiastic followers of Father Divine, representing every State in the Union and about twenty foreign countries." The message states: "For this cause I materialized myself as a Person, that I might materialize everything else that is good for the people. . . . I have everything they seek, everything they desire, and everything they need. I have it. That is what is stirring up the Nation, because I have the Keys of all the hidden treasures of the Earth as well as the hidden treasures of Heaven. The heaven and earth are one, in My Consideration, and under my Jurisdiction." Other messages: "Father Divine is God in Bodily Form. . . . God is, with or without a person: hence it is a principle and



not a Person I am advocating. Yet the Principle has been personized. . . . Every (Labor) Union in the U. S. of A. must deal justly among the people, or else I will *strike* on them. . . . Now, why is it you all Love Me so? It is not because I am any personal relative of yours; it is because you are Spirit of My Spirit and Mind of My Mind. It is because I am of no race, neither creed nor color." Out in Long Branch, Cal., the Caucasian element predominates in the Father Divine constituency. Well, why not? California is the *locale* of Catherine Tingley's society and related cults. Nor must the Americans of the East look down on California. Krishnamurti had quite a following for a time in the East. E.

## II. Ausland.

**Neue, wertvolle Bibelfunde.** Ein Wechselblatt schreibt: „Vor mehreren Monaten kaufte der Wiener Professor und Leiter des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Professor Junker, von ägyptischen Händlern Papyrusfragmente, die sich bei näherer Prüfung als äußerst wertvolle altchristliche Bibeltexte herausstellten. Auf 190 Blättern finden sich Abschnitte aus dem Matthäusevangelium und den Paulusbriefen. Diese Dokumente sollen aus dem zweiten Jahrhundert stammen und gehören damit zu den ältesten bisher bekannten Bibelhandschriften.“ Wir hoffen, daß uns bald weitere Auskunft über diese Handschriften erreicht. A.

„Die Heiligen Rio Grande do Sul. Im letzten Jahre wurden die Jesuiten Roque Gonzalez, Alfons Rodrigues und Johannes Castilho heiliggesprochen. Eine Heiligspredung dieser Männer bedeutet, daß der Papst erklärt, daß sie in der ganzen katholischen Kirche verehrt werden dürfen und man sie bitten darf, Fürsprache bei Jesu für die Christen einzulegen. Im Jesuitenkolleg El Salvador in Buenos Aires wird sogar das wunderbar erhaltene Herz des Vaters Roque gezeigt.

„Der Papst hat nun verordnet, daß der 17. November der Gedächtnistag dieser Heiligen sein soll. Das Volksblatt“ schreibt: „Wo immer in Gottes weiten Welt sich ein Priester der Gesellschaft Jesu befindet, wird im heiligen Opfer und im Vreiergebet unserer Seligen und der Stätte ihres Wirkens gedacht.“

„Welcher Götzendienst damit getrieben wird, zeigt der weitere Bericht des Volksblattes“: „In den Straßen von Buenos Aires knieten während des Eucharistischen Kongresses anderthalb Millionen Menschen und erwarteten andächtig die segnende Stimme des Heiligen Vaters [des Papstes], und vielleicht doppelt so viele lauschten erwartungsvoll auf der weiten Welt vor den Radioempfängern. Und die Stimme des Vaters der Christenheit ertönte: „So segne euch alle auf die Fürsprache der seligen Märtyrer Roque Gonzalez, Alfons Rodrigues und Johannes Castilho der allmächtige Gott, der Vater und der Sohn und der Heilige Geist!““

Diesem Bericht im „Ev.-Luth. Kirchenblatt für Südamerika“ wird dann vom Redakteur, Prof. P. Schelp, noch eine Bemerkung über die Gotteslästerung, die in dieser Sache stattfindet, hinzugefügt und der Hinweis darauf, daß die Mission dieser Jesuiten ein Ausfaugen und Ausbeuten der Indianer bedeutete und daß ihre Mission nur eine übertünchung des Heiligtums war. A.