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Theological Observer — Kirchl. Zeitgeschichtliches

The Convention of the American Lutheran Church.—The fourth convention of this church-body, which, it will be recalled, was organized in 1930, was held in San Antonio, Tex., October 9—16. According to the *Lutheran Standard*, on which we have drawn in the following report, the number of delegates attending totaled 194 (80 clerical delegates, 61 lay delegates, and 53 advisory members). The president, Dr. C. C. Hein, who in the summer had been seriously ill, was compelled by his doctor's advice to remain away from the convention, but it was reported that his state of health was much improved and that he was reelected. The sessions were presided over by the vice-president, Dr. E. Poppen, of Columbus, O. The trustees reported that, while the plan of the church-body which has been labeled "pay-as-you-receive plan" and which means that the people on the salary roll of the organization receive only what has been actually contributed, has kept the organization out of debt, it has placed a great hardship on the Church's workers, the missionaries, professors, and others, who have been compelled to bear the deficit in the receipts. To remedy the situation, at least in part, it was resolved that a "general treasury" be established in which the interests of the various activities, such as missions, education, and charities, are to be merged, so that the situation which obtained hitherto, according to which certain treasuries received ample support while others were neglected, will no longer exist. It is optional with the congregations whether they will continue to send their contributions to special treasuries or label them "general treasury." A so-called supreme court was established, which is to consist of three clergymen and three laymen and to act as a committee on appeals. Concerning its decisions the following provision was adopted: "Every decision of this committee shall be considered final, subject, however, to the approval of the Church, but may be amended or reversed by the Church at the convention next following the handing down of the decision." There is nothing that can be said against this arrangement, it seems to us.—On the action taken regarding intersynodical negotiations, the *Standard* has this report: "The important matter of closer fellowship with Lutheran bodies in America with which our Church is not yet in fellowship was next considered. It was noted with satisfaction that the resolution of the 1934 convention to appoint committees to confer with other Lutheran bodies with the end in view of establishing pulpit- and altar-fellowship with them has been carried out. Negotiations toward that end have been in progress with commissioners of the United Lutheran Church in America and with commissioners of the Synod of Missouri. It was resolved that these negotiations be continued and their result laid before our districts before the Church takes final action in the matter. It was reaffirmed that the end in view in these negotiations is not organic union, but the establishment of pulpit- and altar-fellowship. Taking cognizance of the biennial convention of the United Lutheran Church in America, to be held in Columbus, O., beginning with October 14, the

convention authorized the general president to send a visitor to the meeting of that body." With approval we note that it was "recommended that at conferences and district meetings the doctrine of the divinity of the call and the restudy of the Church's organization be frequently made a part of the program." The recommendation "that the president appoint a committee to prepare liturgical forms for the installation of our general president and the district presidents" has to do with an adiaphoron, but might give encouragement to those who look upon the synod as a sort of consistory rather than as an advisory body. The convention was addressed by Bishop Marahrens, Bishop Meiser, and Dr. Lilje of Germany, who had come to this country to attend a meeting of the executive committee of the Lutheran World Convention.

The truths which were stressed in an address at a mass-meeting by Dr. W. E. Schuette are important enough to be reprinted here. Answering the question, What kind of religion will save our country? he gave this answer: "1. A religion which is Scripturally Christian. 2. A religion which is individual. The saving of souls, patiently, one by one, must be the prime business of the Church. 3. A religion which is democratic, knowing no class. We do not want a country of caste and class. We need a power in our religion that will rebuke those who from ulterior motives would raise class against class. 4. A religion which is not mechanical and confessional, but a religion of the heart. 5. A religion that is willing to struggle, to wrestle, to agonize. This means fighting on many fronts, first of all against the Old Adam in us. It is also a fight against the perplexities that are causing us endless bewilderment today. The educational program is one of these perplexities. This can be solved only by Christian elementary education." A step in the wrong direction, we feel, it was when the convention resolved that "instead of taking steps to reestablish a parochial school, we concentrate on the means and institutions we have for elementary Christian education in our parishes, viz.: the home, the Sunday-school, the Saturday-school, the daily vacation Bible-school, the Luther League, the week-day Bible-school, etc." The establishment of a full-time director of elementary education was referred to the districts for decision. With respect to a pension plan a committee is to be appointed which is to study the situation and make suggestions at the 1938 convention. The budget adopted totals \$735,200.00. A.

Columbus Convention of the U. L. C.—From the three issues of the *Lutheran* in which an exhaustive report on the convention written by the editor appeared we take over what seems of chief importance and interest to our readers. The U. L. C. now has on its lists 3,487 clergymen, of whom 2,761 are engaged in parish-work, and 3,961 congregations. Dr. Knubel was reelected as president, Dr. E. Clarence Miller as treasurer, and Dr. W. H. Greever as secretary. In the interest of Foreign Missions \$850,000 was spent the last year, of which sum \$276,000 came from special gifts of the women. More than twenty foreign missionaries were present and were introduced to the convention. Concerning the merging of seminaries it was reported that by such a step \$40,000 annually might be saved. Rev. Dr. R. H. Ischinger "expressed the

satisfaction of five hundred congregations of the United Lutheran Church where the German language is used in worship because of an arrangement by which young men needed for bilingual pastorates can spend a postgraduate year in Germany so as to perfect familiarity with that language."

The commission on adjudication presented a report containing one "ruling." The *Lutheran* says concerning it: "It had to do with the significance of ordination. The report distinguished between the act of ordination and the certificate. The act of the synod confers the rights, and the certificate has no power aside from the certification of the act of the synod. When a synod removes ordination powers from a man, the certificate is invalid. With regard to the surrender of the certificate from a moral and legal point of view, the synod has a right to request the return of the certificate. The man has a moral responsibility to return it, even though it is of no value. This, in substance, is the ruling of the commission." Inasmuch as this decision combats the view that ordination confers a "character indelebilis" it has our approval. — Speaking of the greetings brought by the president of the Augustana Synod, Dr. P. O. Bersell, the report says: "Almost from its inception sixty years ago till 1918, Augustana was a part of the former General Council. Pulpit- and altar-fellowship continues of course, and there is cooperation between the Foreign Missions boards of that synod and ourselves, particularly in the work in India." This reminds one of the confusion reigning in American Lutheranism today. The Augustana Synod practises pulpit- and altar-fellowship with the U. L. C.; at the same time, in the American Lutheran Conference it has alined itself with the American Lutheran Church, which says that it cannot establish such fellowship with the U. L. C. till certain obstacles in the sphere of doctrine and practise have been removed. When, replying to the greetings of the president of the Augustana Synod, a prominent member of the U. L. C. "asserted that American Lutheranism is provincial," he did not touch the point of greatest importance. Earnest Lutherans are not much concerned about the question whether their Lutheranism is provincial or not; what they are anxious about is to see it loyal to the Word of God. — The report of the Committee on Moral and Social Welfare tried to steer a safe course between aloofness from the affairs of this world (*Weltflucht*) and the social gospel. The resolution on the promotion of peace as amended in the convention, though carefully worded and not nearly so radical as similar resolutions emanating from other camps, veers too much to the left in requesting educational agencies of the Church "to provide material on these and kindred themes in their treatment of the cause of peace: 1. Mandatory neutrality legislation; 2. removal of munition manufacture from private industry; 3. limitation of military expenditure; 4. popular referendum before our country can enter war except in case of invasion." While it is true that the resolution does not declare these measures to be effective instruments of peace and merely recommends that material be provided so that they can be studied, it appears that the agencies of the Church are to be used to promote their acceptance. — With respect to marriage, this reso-

lution was adopted: "We reaffirm our position, holding that no Lutheran minister should perform a marriage ceremony for a divorced person till he is convinced that the individual is the innocent party in a divorce occasioned by grounds recognized by the Church as valid."

The convention declared, and after a vigorous debate reaffirmed, that in its opinion "the service of women as members of church councils, delegates to synods, and members of boards is not unscriptural." A number of members felt correctly that here a clear Scripture-teaching was brushed aside. But their efforts to make the convention take a different stand were not successful. We here have to insert a part of the letter of protest published in the *Lutheran* of November 5 by Dr. J. A. W. Haas, president emeritus of Muehlenberg College and one of the leading men in the U. L. C. He opposes the idea voiced at the meeting "that the words of St. Paul in 1 Cor. 11, 3; 14, 34, and 1 Tim. 2, 11, 12 were to be interpreted as temporary advice and not as containing a fundamental principle, going back to the place of woman through Creation." Continuing, he says: "If these words are simply opinions of St. Paul and are eliminated, then a dangerous procedure has begun; for then other principles which have always been considered binding will be put aside according to the spirit of an age. I protest thoroughly against this type of interpretation which reduces certain words to mere human opinion and assails the integrity of the Word of God. Let us have this question out, and let us return to the sound position which has always been maintained in our Church. I find in this attitude the encroachment of Modernism in our Church." May these vigorous words receive the attention which they deserve. If we understand the *Lutheran*, the minority exercised its right of appeal to the Commission of Adjudication "in order to decide 'the binding force' of the convention's majority decision." The report continues: "The commission cannot report before 1938; it may not be able to express itself at that time. The commission's decision on one point does not nullify the conclusion reached by the majority, but till it is rendered, the question of eligibility of women as congregational representatives might be raised and embarrassment be caused. We believe congregations should wait till the Commission of Adjudication has had an opportunity to hand down a decision before putting to actual test the election of women to represent them." This is not very clear. It seems that the matter has not yet been definitely and finally settled, but that such congregations as wish to may now elect women representatives for the synodical conventions.

With respect to intersynodical negotiations we failed to find any remarks in the report of the *Lutheran* touching this subject. From other reports, however, it becomes apparent that the subject came before the convention. Since in another connection the matter has received consideration, we shall not here give much space to it. We shall briefly submit the statement which, according to the *Christian Century* correspondent, was proposed by the U. L. C. commission "to meet the objection that the United Church goes too far in the direction of fellowship with non-Lutherans." The statement reads: "Pastors and congregations shall not practise indiscriminate pulpit- and altar-fellowship with

pastors and churches of other denominations, whereby doctrinal differences are ignored or virtually made matters of indifference. Especially shall no religious fellowship whatsoever be practised with such individuals and groups as are not basically evangelical." The correspondent adds rather cynically: "It is hoped that a statement so highly ambiguous will satisfy every one." He then makes the further statement: "It is clear, however, that there are a great many United Lutherans who are unwilling to purchase closer union with other Lutherans at the cost of greater isolation from other Protestants." Whether the convention accepted the statement of the commission as an expression of its own sentiments is not stated. A.

Unionism.—The first Sunday in January, 1936, Durham, N. C., engaged in its third annual union Communion service. Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, *Lutherans*, and Christians took part in the service. Rev. E. L. Hillman preached a sermon on the place of the cross in Christian experience. — *Watchman-Examiner*, Feb. 13, 1936. K.

First Woman Minister Ordained by United Church of Canada.—According to a news dispatch November 4, 1936, had been chosen as the date for the ordination of Miss Lydia Gruchy, B. A., B. D., as a minister of the United Church of Canada. The ceremony was to be performed in St. Andrew's United Church at Moose Jaw, where Miss Gruchy served as assistant minister. The dispatch says that, while Miss Gruchy is Canada's first woman minister, she will not long be the only one. There are other women members in the United Church who have the same goal in view. At present there are six women registered in the theological course at Emmanuel College, Toronto. That by such a course the Word of God touching an important point of Christian life and service is made of "no effect" is disregarded by these people. A.

Brief Items.—Speaking of the officiating of lodges at funerals, an Episcopalian rector of Long Island, writing in the *Living Church*, has this to say: "My most unpleasant experience was once when, after I, as a priest of the Church, had said the committal, I had to listen to the chaplain of a lodge say the *precise* words which I had said. Lodges are good for sociability and to give relief when needed, but *why* they should have any part in a funeral service is beyond my comprehension. Upon the occasion referred to I said to the funeral director after the service, 'Don't ever get me into such a situation again.'" This man is merely scratching the surface, but even so his testimony is not without value. — The "Question Box" of the *Christian Century* is nothing if not modernistic; but occasionally it brings material which is worth reading. Writing on the question whether Herod the Great may be believed to have slaughtered the babes of Bethlehem even though secular history does not mention the outrage, the editor concludes his account of this tyrant as follows: "Thus came to its somber close the career of this brilliant soldier, ambitious ruler, insatiable builder, clever politician, conscienceless egotist, and bloody monster, Herod, miscalled the Great. No wonder the incident of the slaughter of a few children in Bethlehem, whether fact or fiction, was forgotten in the multitude of

horrors which stained the pages of his life." Why the editor has to wave the flag of his unbelief before us in the phrase "whether fact or fiction," we cannot understand.—A vigorous and informing article by Reinhold Niebuhr in the *Christian Century* discusses "The Secular and the Religious." Speaking of the forms which secularism has assumed in the various countries, he reminds us that in Catholic nations, such as France and Russia (Greek Catholic, of course), the attitude is definitely anti-religious, that in Germany it is consciously irreligious, while in America it manifests indifference or contempt rather than hostility and in Great Britain it is one of general tolerance. We believe that these observations are correct.—When a Spanish delegation, representing the socialistic government, recently toured the United States, the surprising feature of this affair was that one member of it was a Roman Catholic priest, Luis Sarasola. The universal impression has been that the Catholic clergy of Spain favors the Fascists. The papers have now brought the information that this priest is not in good standing and not permitted to officiate. The *Living Church*, it seems, is right when it says that, no matter which side wins in Spain, the result will not be a happy, democratic, or truly Christian Spain.—Dr. Machen's organization, the Presbyterian Church of America, was scheduled to hold its second General Assembly November 12—15, 1936. At the time when this announcement appeared the statement was made that the organization numbers 100 pastors and 51 congregations, the latter being located in sixteen States. That it spends, as we are told, two thousand dollars a month for Home Missions and church extension besides maintaining a considerable force of workers in mission-fields abroad is certainly remarkable.—It is one hundred years ago that the first Methodist missionaries were sent to China. They hailed from South Carolina, and their names were Charles Taylor and Benjamin Jenkins.—"At the request of the Lutherans a statement of Episcopal church policy with reference to proselytizing has been made by the house of bishops. The statement follows: 'The policy of the Episcopal Church is fraternal consideration for people of other Christian bodies. Deploring, as we do, the divisions which separate the followers of Christ into various denominations, we nevertheless discountenance schemes of proselytizing in order to break down any other religious group. We look for the day when Christian disciples may be joined together in a common faith, a common worship, a common ministry, and a common service. Meantime we respect the convictions of those whose allegiance is lodged elsewhere than in the membership of the Episcopal Church. We recognize the right and the responsibility to seek out the unchurched or those who may have drifted from their former connection; but we disapprove of attempts to invade the congregation of an already established Christian work.'" This item is taken from the *Christian Century*. Who the Lutherans are that the report refers to we do not know. We surmise, however, that the Augustana Synod representatives are meant, with whom the Episcopalians conferred some time ago.—The conference of Detroit Episcopal clergymen issued a statement which concluded as follows: "Resolved that as clergymen we maintain it to be both our

inalienable right under God and our bounden duty in the service of His Church to point out the social as well as the individual sins of humanity and that as ministers of Jesus the Christ we are bound by our ordination vows to give our thought, our time, and our energies no less to the removal of social wrongs than to the causes of individual sins. This we as Christian ministers hold to be our duty to do and to teach, and we stand ready to fulfil our mission, making whatever sacrifice may be necessary, God being our help." Do these clergymen remember that they have been called as pastors or shepherds of particular flocks? Do they consider it their duty to reform the world in general? Has anybody ever doubted their right to speak about social sins of which their church-members are guilty? These are questions which arise in our mind as we read this pronouncement.—The *World-wide Temple Broadcaster*, edited by Rev. H. E. Weinzierl, whose address is Berkley, Royal Oak, Mich., announces the opening of the Temple grade school and Temple high school, describing this venture as follows: "The Temple school exists for the purpose of helping pupils to live a more abundant Christian life and to fit them for work for the Master. We make no attempt to get our students to join our particular denomination. We simply teach the Bible as it is written. Other subjects are taught so as to be most helpful in Christian living. All teachers and officers must be of the highest type in Christian character. All teachers must be qualified, certified teachers." It seems that this means that a private grade school, with which a private high school is connected, has been opened in Berkley, Royal Oak, Mich. Since the founder of the school, Rev. Weinzierl, is a Protestant evangelist, we are here dealing with a unique undertaking. It will be interesting to watch the development of this institution, even though the reference to living a more "abundant life" shows that the fog of what is technically called "enthusiasm" hovers over the landscape.—One of the leading false teachers in the field of the New Testament died lately, Prof. Weinel of Jena. The *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* correctly characterizes him as belonging to the group of "theological Romanticists."—On October 20, 1936, Dr. Carl G. Erickson, president of Upsala College, East Orange, N. J., died at the age of fifty-nine. He was one of the prominent leaders of the Augustana Synod.—The Methodist Church lost one of its outstanding men through the death of Dr. Ezra Squier Tipple, who from 1912 to 1928 was president of Drew Seminary. Two books which he wrote had to do with the work of Asbury, one of the first bishops of the Methodist Church in the United States.—From Buenos Aires, Argentina, a correspondent writes the *Christian Century* as follows: "Again a project has been formulated in the Department of Education of the province of Buenos Aires which would concede to the Catholic Church the right to teach religion during class hours as well as to establish the plan whereby the ecclesiastical authorities would make the school program and select the text-books. In the Federal District of Buenos Aires this tendency is also in evidence, where a census of teachers in certain sections of the city has been taken to ascertain their religious affiliation. In other instances discrimination has been made

against pupils because of the religious affiliation of their parents. These moves, in the light of a recent radio message by Governor Fresco, announcing his purpose to put priests to teach religion in all schools of the Buenos Aires province within ninety days, shows a strengthening of the alinement between political and ecclesiastical authorities." Rome is said to be shrewd, but it does not seem to be able to learn the lesson which is taught by the situation in Mexico and Spain.—On October 1 the new president of Augustana College and Theological Seminary, Rock Island, was inducted in his office. It is Dr. Conrad Bergendoff. The new president delivered an address on the subject "The Faith of Augustana." A.

Further Brief Items.—For the first time in its history the Presbyterian Synod of Oklahoma has chosen for its moderator an Indian, viz., the Rev. Nelson J. Morris, a full-blooded Choctaw, in charge of four Indian congregations.—Helen Gould Shepard has prepared pamphlets of Bible-verses to be memorized, which the American Tract Society, 7 W. 45th St., New York City, is now publishing in about thirty different languages. Said Mrs. Shepard when she submitted her selection of Scripture-passages: "As a girl I memorized chapters and verses which have meant much through the years in the way of comfort and inspiration. It is my earnest prayer that God will bless this effort, that the student may form the habit of memorizing and learning other selections besides those suggested here, and that many may be led to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and into a deeper spiritual life." Also in our circles the memorizing of Bible-passages could be attended to with more zeal, and not only the words, but also the locations. And not only the Lutheran laity is deficient in this wholesome practise.—The illustrious English preacher Dr. Campbell Morgan will celebrate at the end of this current year the diamond anniversary of his preaching ministry. He began preaching when he was fourteen years old and has delivered sermons, lectures, and addresses throughout the world. Much effort is spent by Dr. Morgan on the very necessary task of acquainting his people with the Bible and as a teacher of Holy Scripture. He is unusually interesting and successful. We heard him several years ago and were quite amazed at his ability to make the Bible alive to people and people alive to the Bible.—Against Father Divine (alias George Baker), the Universal Negro Improvement Association (what's in a name?) of the United States and Canada passed the following resolutions at its meeting in Toronto: "Whereas the said J. M. Divine impresses himself upon the said people as God Almighty and refers to himself as God and attempts to behave as if he were such, . . . be it resolved that this conference does hereby declare the said J. M. Divine blasphemous in his doctrine and therefore advises all sane, intellectual, and self-respecting Negroes throughout the United States and Canada not to accept and follow his blasphemous doctrines, as by so doing it constitutes a spiritual condemnation of the soul of the believer and separates the said soul from the Spirit of the one true and living God. The said doctrine is worse than paganism and heathen idolatry."—Not religious, but economic reasons are behind Dr. Ambedkar's movement

from Hinduism, as a communication from Dr. Ambedkar to Dr. Moonjee of the Hindu Mahasabha, an organization working for the preservation of Hindu religion and culture, proves. Dr. Moonjee suggested that the untouchables embrace Sikhism rather than Islam or Christianity, since they may thus remain within Hindu culture. But Dr. Ambedkar really favors Mohammedanism, since that cult can give the depressed Hindus all they need socially, economically, and politically. "Christianity," he wrote, "seems equally attractive, but it is numerically too weak to render much support to the converts from the depressed classes." Sikhism is quite inadequate since it has few attractions and cannot help the depressed classes socially. On the other hand, if the depressed classes join Christianity, they will help the British, and if they join Islam, they will only increase Muslim domination, so that, after all, the interests of the country suggest that the untouchables become Sikhs. — In small communities of New York State local united Protestant churches are being developed. Just now an interdenominational committee of the State Council of Churches is working on the project. Here is a practical development of the community-church idea, which, as John Horsch rightly says, must needs become Unitarian in the end. — In 1827 the Society of Friends suffered a split into Orthodox and Hicksite Friends (Quakers). The test doctrine was that of Christ's deity, which the Orthodox maintained, but the Hicksites denied. In September of this year both branches met in joint business session to discuss the advantages of cooperative activity. — About the revision of the Bible, on which Roman Catholic scholars are now working, Bishop Edwin V. O'Hara recently said: "The fundamental purpose is to bring the Bible into the language of the present day. It will not be 'modernized' in the sense of slang, and no part of the dignity of the old text is to be lost. So are the beauty and the rhythm of the old to be preserved." The Catholic translation, which is to be revised, is the so-called Douay-Reims English Version, which came out in 1582 and was somewhat revised by Bishop Challoner of England about two centuries later. Since then no changes of any kind have been made in the text. — It is estimated that in Japan about twenty thousand persons commit suicide each year. In July of this year a memorial service was held for those young men and women who committed *shinju*, or love suicide. Now a Japan Suicide Prevention Society has been formed under the direction of a "suicide specialist," which seeks to put a check on self-destruction. — According to the *Intelligence-Leader* only an insignificant percentage of fourteen thousand delinquency cases brought before the Juvenile Court in Los Angeles had any real contact with churches. Most of these children were ragged and many uncouth, while practically all of them were growing up without religious instruction. *Christianity Today*, from which we have clipped these news brevities, writes: "What is the Church doing in the presence of such facts? Most of these children might have been saved. Hundreds of theological graduates remain unemployed, and thousands of children roam the streets untouched by the Church. Here is a mission challenge. 'Feed My lambs.'" J. T. M.

