

1-1-1944

Theological Observer. – Kirchlich Zeitgeschichtliches

John Theodore Mueller
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mueller, John Theodore (1944) "Theological Observer. – Kirchlich Zeitgeschichtliches," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 15 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol15/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Theological Observer

Lutheran Strength in the United States.—The National Lutheran Council News Bureau has released the following information on the present status of the Lutheran Church in America. The date under which the item was issued was November 12.

With an increase of 64,486 in the number of baptized during 1942, membership in the Lutheran churches of the United States and Canada has hit a new high of 5,116,807, according to a compilation prepared by Miss Mary Boozer, statistician, and made public by the National Lutheran Council.

Of this number 3,635,588 are confirmed members of 15,909 organized congregations belonging to 17 different general bodies national in scope. The three largest groups are the United Lutheran Church with 1,731,059 members, the Synodical Conference with 1,683,128 members, comprising five general bodies, and the American Lutheran Conference with 1,621,608 members, comprising five general bodies. Six smaller independent bodies total 72,467 members.

While the investment in church property increased 1½ per cent, congregational indebtedness decreased almost 10 per cent, indicating a much stronger financial condition. Meantime debt reduction and rise in plant maintenance and salaries have carried local congregational expenses up about 10 per cent during the year. During the same period the membership increased its contributions to the work of the church at large by 19.24 per cent, an actual gain of \$2,134,484.

These gains took place, Miss Boozer says, in spite of a decrease in the number of active pastors, due largely to the demands of the chaplaincy services of the United States and Canadian armies and navies. Although there were 18 more congregations at the close of the period, there were 143 fewer pastors serving them. The effect of the decrease in active pastorates was felt particularly in the "preaching places" where no organized congregations exist, of which there were 101 fewer being served at the end of the year. Miss Boozer explains this: "When there aren't enough pastors to go around, the small, scattered groups of Lutherans who hold occasional services but cannot organize as congregations have to suffer."

A.

Lutheran Scholarship.—Writing on the sainted Dr. Reu, Dr. Herman A. Preus of Luther Seminary writes in the *Lutheran Church Herald*, "There will not be another Dr. Reu, and his passing leaves a great void in the Church. But there are things that he represented that must not be permitted to die. He represented the Lutheran tradition of theological scholarship at its best. He was a theologian in his own right. His scholarship was great enough to break into the libraries of Leipzig and Tuebingen. There stand his books on the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Bible. But there they are lonesome, those books, waiting for company from American Lutheranism of this generation. It will not come from a Lutheran Church whose educational system forsakes the scholarly, theological tradition of the Reus and the Walthers and the Krauths and the Korens for a way that is broader, shorter, and easier. The way of theological scholarship is deep and narrow, with a foundation solid to the bottom, anchored in the Word of God." All of us who love our dear Lutheran Church and wish to see it grow and prosper and be a power for good in generations to come, if God should see fit to let this world endure for another century or two, must heed what is here stated as to ideals in our theological education.

A.

A Survey of Religious Life and Thought.—Under this heading Ernest Gordon in the *Sunday School Times* (Nov. 13, 1943) reports the following (among other things): "The National Conference of Christians and Jews has drawn up its own Religious Book List for Religious Book Week. The Catholic books are selected by F. X. Talbot, editor of the Jesuit organ *America*, who thinks Protestantism is at the end of its rope and is happy that it is so. The Protestant selection is prevaillingly from modern-minders: Fosdick, Gilkey, Sperry, Weatherhead, Wieman, Rufus Jones, Georgia Harkness, Soares, Van Dusen. Recommended are such books as Werfel's *Song of Bernadette*, Sholem Ash's *The Nazarene*, Clinchy's *Growth of Good Will*, and *Faith for Today* by Stanley High, Frank Kingdon, G. G. Walsh, Louis Finkelstein, and Swami Nikhilananda."—"An article in *The Thomist* for April, 1943, entitled 'The Wisdom That Is Mary,' is summarized by Dr. Hutton of the *British Weekly*. It identifies the Virgin Mary with the Wisdom of Proverbs (ch. 8), describes her as 'the first-born before all creatures,' of whom it is written: 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning.' She is called 'the unspotted mirror of God's majesty,' of whom it is written: 'I was with Him, forming all things,' the 'root of the universal order.' Being but one, she can do all things; and remaining in herself the same, she reneweth all things. She is the daughter of the Father, mother of the Son, and spouse of the Holy Spirit. Rooted in the order of the Trinity, she is more worthy than the order of the universe, whose transcendental principle she is."—"An egregious violation of religious freedom is reported from the city of Quebec. For distributing pamphlets containing nothing but Bible verses in French, Mrs. H. Mullins and Miss Bauchey were arrested and thrown into the county jail, where they were kept from July 8 to July 19. They were released only when the matter was brought up in the Canadian Parliament." Rome today is aggressively alert, and Protestants everywhere are carefully observing her religious and political movements. There is nothing evangelical about Romanism today, just as there was nothing evangelical about the Papacy at Luther's time.

J. T. M.

Principia — Non Homines.—In a very timely editorial on this subject *The Calvin Forum* (October, 1943) points out that the Reformation was a movement about principles and not men. The article is too long for us to quote it here in full, but even in excerpt it demonstrates how earnestly aggressive orthodox Calvinism is insisting upon the Protestant (Lutheran) fundamentals about which the Reformation was concerned. We read (among other things): "The last day of this month [October] will be a day of pranks and phantoms, of simulated ghosts and witches—celebrating no one knows what. For Protestants everywhere it will be Reformation Day. For many a Catholic preacher it will mean the celebration of All Saints' Day, but also another opportunity to propagate an old, old lie: that 'the Protestant Revolution was brought on because a man refused to be bound to the Church's principle of penance.' We wish to emphasize that the Reformation does not date to a man, but to the rebirth of principles. *Principia, non homines!*"—The editorial then explains how on Halloween, 426 years ago, Luther posted his

famous Ninety-five Theses, which "sounded the death knell of an ecclesiastical unity that had existed almost unbroken for fifteen centuries." Next, the article, explaining Luther's life and theological development (beginning with John Staupitz), describes his "first principium: righteousness by faith." We read: "He [Luther] interrupted his university work to go as a pilgrim to Rome. Eagerly he visited every relic and shrine; he climbed the *scala santa* on his knees, when suddenly through his memory passed the words, 'The just shall live by faith,' and the whole vain system of petty work-righteousness struck him [historically, this representation is not altogether correct]. He stood bolt upright and walked down again. . . . Such a mouth could not remain closed when Tetzel came selling indulgences for actual or contemplated sin. In vain do Catholics today defend that scandal by saying that they still must cater to the 'ignorance of many Catholics.' It is to be feared that the whole hierarchy was reared on the rotten foundation of lay ignorance. This crystallized the second principium: the priesthood of all believers. This he organized under four heads: 1. By faith a man goes directly to God. 2. The Church is not the door, but Christ is; the Church is only the signpost [doctrinally, this representation is not quite accurate]. 3. The work of a kitchen maid is as holy as the meditation of a monk. 4. From that follows the educating function of the Church in the means of grace [here the Calvinistic deviation from the Scriptural doctrine of the means of grace does not allow the entire unfolding of all prerogatives which Luther ascribed to believers as kings and priests before God, e.g., the office of the keys]. . . . There followed four years of growing influence and opposition. Finally the Diet met in the presence of Emperor Charles V in the city of Worms. . . . His mind set like flint, he made his famous choice: 'Here I stand, God help me, I cannot do otherwise.' What has that choice not meant for his future life! What has it not meant for future Christianity! For in it was formulated the third principium: the sole authority of Scripture. These are the irrevocable principles upon which Christianity stands or over which false Christianity falls. Without them, say what you will, you have not Christianity any more than Jeroboam had the Mosaic law at Dan and Bethel. Let us not now begin to compromise. Let us not now return to a false righteousness. Let us not now be misled by the glib tongues of human leaders. Let us cling to *principia—non homines!*" While indicating in our bracketed remarks that the writer has not always accurately stated the historical and theological facts, we, nevertheless, express our admiration at the fearless and lucid enunciation of the three fundamentals of the Reformation, the *sola gratia*, the *sola Scriptura*, and the *iura credentium* as the *regium sacerdotium*. All three points deserve emphasis today when Rome again propagandizes itself as the *defensor fidei Christianae* and for this reason apparently is willing to make doctrinal concessions in Protestant lands. The Reformation certainly dealt with principles and with such principles as Rome still denies. The *Calvin Forum* has done well to call attention to this fact. J. T. M.

Roman Catholic Views of a Just Peace.—*America* (Jesuit weekly) publishes a statement on "A Just Peace," which is signed by a number of Roman Catholic ecclesiastical dignitaries and laymen. Our purpose in

submitting this material is not to criticize it, but to acquaint our readers with this authoritative pronouncement. Exchanges state that prominent Protestants and Jewish rabbis have likewise affixed their signatures.

"We present for the consideration of all men of good will the following postulates of a just peace as embodying the principles of the moral law and their prime applications to world problems of our day. To our mind they express the minimum requirements of a peace which Christians can endorse as fair to all men. They are the foundation on which Catholics in a free world can work from deep motives of Christian justice and charity for the building of a better social order.

"1. The Moral Law Must Govern World Order. The organization of a just peace depends upon practical recognition of the fact that not only individuals but nations, states, and international society are subject to the sovereignty of God and to the moral law which comes from God.

"2. The Rights of the Individual Must be Assured. The dignity of the human person as the image of God must be set forth in all its essential implications in an international declaration of rights, and be vindicated by the positive action of national governments and international organization. States as well as individuals must repudiate racial, religious, or other discrimination in violation of those rights.

"3. The Rights of Oppressed, Weak, or Colonial Peoples Must be Protected. The rights of all peoples, large and small, subject to the good of the organized world community, must be safeguarded within the framework of collective security. The progress of undeveloped, colonial, or oppressed peoples toward political responsibility must be the object of international concern.

"4. The Rights of Minorities Must be Secured. National governments and international organization must respect and guarantee the rights of ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities to economic livelihood, to equal opportunity for educational and cultural development, and to political equality.

"5. International Institutions to Maintain Peace with Justice Must be Organized. An enduring peace requires the organization of international institutions which will: (a) develop a body of international law; (b) guarantee the faithful fulfillment of international obligations and revise them when necessary; (c) assure collective security by drastic limitation and continuing control of armaments, compulsory arbitration and adjudication of controversies, and the use, when necessary, of adequate sanctions to enforce the law.

"6. International Economic Co-operation Must be Developed. International economic collaboration to assist all states to provide an adequate standard of living for their citizens must replace the present economic monopoly and exploitation of natural resources by privileged groups and states.

"7. A Just Social Order Within Each State Must be Achieved. Since the harmony and well-being of the world community are intimately bound up with the internal equilibrium and social order of the individual states, steps must be taken to provide for the security of the family,

the collaboration of all groups and classes in the interest of the common good, a standard of living adequate for self-development and family life, decent conditions of work, and participation by labor in decisions affecting its welfare." A.

Brief Items.—The famine in India is becoming terrific. Many millions have all their lives hovered on the very border of starvation, and now the disaster is becoming complete. Can we do anything for those sufferers besides praying for them?

In connection with the convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Cleveland held in October, 1943, it was mentioned that the Church has about 150 bishops.

At the meeting of the Associated Lutheran Charities held in Chicago last October it was resolved by the 300 social church workers that were assembled "to suggest to theological seminaries and teachers' schools of the Missouri Synod that further courses in psychiatric and therapeutic work be included in their curricula." Whether this can be done without taking students away from the foundational studies will have to be carefully investigated.

Illiteracy, so James Yen of China states, is being successfully fought in that country. At a meeting in New York he is reported to have stated, "Since 1940 over 45 million people have been taught to read. By 1949 illiteracy will be entirely swept out." Let us see to it that the Chinese will be given the Scriptures to read.

President Hutchins of the University of Chicago said a good word for theology, stating that "Theology exceeds all other disciplines, because God reveals what the wisest man does not know and can never learn by himself." The correspondent in the *Christian Century*, after reporting these words, continues, "Describing the ministry as 'the intellectual profession par excellence,' he [that is, Hutchins] asserted that sacred theology is the 'queen of sciences' because without it all other educational pursuits stultify themselves."

A letter from the chairman of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship published in the *Christian Century* shows that Dr. Schweitzer is still working at his hospital in Lambourine French Equatorial Africa. It will be recalled that besides being a New Testament scholar of eminence and an organist and a Bach exponent, he is a missionary doctor. His religious platform, sad to say, is entirely Modernistic. A.

To Our Subscribers

It has been our custom to retain the names of our subscribers on our lists for two numbers after the subscription has expired, so that the subscriptions could be continued without interruption in case a renewal came in late. We were very happy to follow this plan at extra expense, but we are now unable to continue this policy because of present conditions.

Our Government has insisted that we reduce consumption of paper and eliminate all possible waste. Because of the restriction in the use of paper it will become necessary to discontinue subscriptions for all of our periodicals with the last number paid for under the subscription agreement. We shall, however, continue our policy of reminding our subscribers of the expiration of the subscription by inserting the usual number of notices in the second last and the last numbers of the periodicals they receive. It is our sincere hope that our subscribers will co-operate with us and the Government by renewing their subscriptions promptly upon receipt of the first notice.

June, 1943

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE