

5-1-1952

Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Recommended Citation

Mayer, F. E. (1952) "Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 23, Article 29.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol23/iss1/29>

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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE CHURCH IN ITS RELATION TO FREEMASONRY AND RELATED ORDERS

Fraternal organizations in our country are still increasing their memberships. This is true especially of such entrenched organizations as Freemasonry and orders associated with it, and of such social benefit organizations as the Fraternal Order of Eagles, the Loyal Order of Moose, and the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. The three latter, in particular, are promoting their cause by stressing the social services they are rendering not only to their members but also to non-members who suddenly find themselves in desperate need of physical relief. Quite frequently the *Congressional Record* contains an elaborate account of the charitable efforts of one or the other of these organizations. There can be no doubt that largely because of this humanitarian interest these organizations are gaining many friends in our country. We need to bear this factor in mind when dealing with people who are affiliated with or wish to affiliate with one of these organizations. People are easily blinded by the social service program of these organizations and draw the false conclusion that these organizations do more to alleviate distress than the Church.

In this world of change it is inevitable that also fraternal organizations change. A complete list of changes in name or status of some 160 fraternal organizations effected since 1912 may be found in *The Fraternal Compend-Digest 1951*, pp. 340—345 (The Fraternal Field, Cedar Rapids, Iowa). An examination of these changes reveals that a number of fraternal organizations have within recent years converted into mutual life insurance organizations. Others have been merged with well-established life insurance companies. Some form of ritual is still retained by many of the reorganized associations, but the ritual is no longer a ritual in the objectionable sense. It is often no more than a highly formalized statement of the objectives of the organization containing not even a reference to God. Some organizations which still operate on a ritual receive members on the strength of an application card duly filled out and completely dispense with initiation and ritualistic ceremonies. There still are, however, many fraternal orders besides the standard orders (Freemasonry, Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, and others) which operate on a ritual and which, officially at least, make the ritual obligatory. Congregations will do well to purchase for their pastor a copy of Dr. Theo. Graebner's *A Handbook of*

Organizations, since the information which it supplies is still supremely relevant.

Of all orders, Freemasonry constitutes the real nemesis of the Church. This is due to the fact that Freemasonry is the oldest and most formidably established order and that it has an international prestige and character which cannot be blithely disregarded. According to figures released in *Statistics Fraternal Societies 1951*, p. 221 (The Fraternal Monitor, Rochester, N. Y.), the Masonic membership throughout the world is about 5,200,000. The statistics for the United States are: total membership in the United States, 3,597,810. Total number of Royal Arch Masons in the United States, 634,000; Royal and Select Masters, 245,000; Knights Templars, 323,000. The membership of the Mystic Order Veiled Prophets of the Enchanted Realm totals 104,000; Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, over 575,000. These two orders are not Masonic bodies, but their membership is composed strictly of Masons, the Shriners being limited to those who have reached the 32° of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite or who are Knights Templars in good standing.

Freemasonry is, furthermore, so significant an order because its form of ritual and its basic religious philosophy lies at the basis of practically all rituals used in fraternal organizations. Again, these organizations are very largely under the control and leadership of high-degreed Masons. Freemasonry thus exercises a stranglehold on many fraternal organizations which might otherwise be inclined to move away from the basic religious suppositions of their rituals.

We are frequently charged with misinterpreting the rituals of Freemasonry and other orders. Masons and members of other secret oath-bound organizations tell us: "We are not a religious order. We have no religion. We are not a religious organization." We must not fear this charge. We should be careful, however, not to make it appear as though we regard Masonry a religion in the same sense in which we regard Shintoism or Mohammedanism to be religions. Freemasonry is not a religion in that sense. But that consideration makes Freemasonry and its offspring (other fraternal organizations) all the more subtle and dangerous. Freemasonry is a religious philosophy. Freemasonry and similar orders, though discreetly determined not to identify themselves with any one religion and also disclaiming for themselves the character of a religious institution, represent an eclectic, syncretistic, and universalistic religious philosophy. This philosophy claims to rise above all religions, including the Christian religion. Freemasonry regards itself to be the final synthesis of religious thought found in all religions.

It presumes to be a distillate of the ancient Oriental mystery cults, of the established religions of the world, and of every other endeavor of man to penetrate into the unknown. Freemasonry, like its offspring, perpetuates the old deistic creed: 1. God exists; 2. God should be worshiped; 3. worship of God consists in the performance of virtuous and pious acts; 4. God demands repentance; 5. God punishes and rewards in a future life. In keeping with this creed, Freemasonry completely levels out the concept of God. Its members may worship God under whatever name they wish to employ (Jove, Baal, Allah, Jehovah, etc.); man is saved not through God's redemption in Christ, but through his own good works; man should, of course, feel sorry for his mistakes and sins, but he makes amends by performing better and more good works; man believes in some kind of hereafter, but a hereafter of bliss to be shared by all who have performed pious and virtuous works. This is the religious philosophy which underlies the three basic degrees of Freemasonry and is also found in other degrees. It is also the religious basis underlying the rituals of related orders. If any one questions this analysis, let him read Mackey, the *Ritualist*, and scores of interpretations of Freemasonry by Masons. But let him, in particular, honestly examine the degrees themselves.

The Reformed Protestant denominations in our country have quite generally given up the fight against secret oath-bound fraternal organizations. Except for some minor groups in the Presbyterian, Reformed, and Baptist Churches, and for the perfectionistic and Pentecostal sects, many of which do not classify as "regular" churches, Protestantism has capitulated to the growing pressures of Freemasonry and related orders. In England there is a new awareness of the dangers of Freemasonry due chiefly to the heroic efforts of the Rev. William Walton Hannah of Sussex, England, and of some of his friends. The Rev. Hannah is now publishing his findings in a book titled *Darkness Made Visible*. Many of our pastors will wish to study this volume and become re-established in their own heart regarding the rightness of our opposition to Freemasonry and all orders which operate on rituals similar to those of the Masonic order.

Romanism is still carrying on its campaign against Freemasonry, though, one must remember, for reasons largely different from those advanced by Lutherans. Romanism deals with the minor orders in terms of *Canon Law 684*, which reads: "The faithful deserve praise when they join societies which have been erected or, at least, recommended by the Church. They should beware of societies which are secret, condemned, seditious or suspected and of those which strive to withdraw themselves from the legitimate supervision of the Church."

In a communication which I received November 9, 1950, from the Archdiocese of St. Louis, the Rev. Msgr. William M. Drumm, Chancellor, writes: "The tenor of the general legislation of the Church [Catholic] is to discourage membership in any society outside the Church which is not purely civic or philanthropic. Whenever the Chancery Office receives an inquiry from a pastor or lay person, our policy has been to find out what we can about the purpose of the particular organization and the existence of a religious ritual. Usually the very fact that an inquiry is made is sufficient reason for us to discourage membership and recommend some equivalent Catholic organization." We have it, however, on unimpeachable authority that many Catholics, including priests, belong to fraternal organizations other than Freemasonry. They not only join but, in instances, assume the leadership in the local and, where this is possible, exert their influence that funds earmarked by the organization for charitable purposes are partially channeled into Catholic institutions or endeavors.

The official position of Lutheran Churches outside the Synodical Conference regarding secret oath-bound and anti-Christian organizations was brought to the attention of our people in two articles published in the *Lutheran Witness* of July 10 and 24, 1951. It appears, however, that some Lutherans outside the Synodical Conference pay no or only little attention to the official commitments of their bodies regarding fraternal organizations. Nevertheless, the evidence supplied in the *Witness* articles should enable our people to counteract the frequent charges and insinuations that our Synod and the sister Synods in the Synodical Conference are the only Lutheran bodies which officially oppose and condemn lodgery.

The Greek-Orthodox Church in our country, which is growing at a significant pace, is strictly opposed to Freemasonry and evaluates Freemasonry somewhat in terms in which our Synod has always evaluated it. The position of the Greek-Orthodox Church is clearly stated by Eusebius Alexander P'Stephanou in *The Orthodox Church Militant* (Cosmos Greek-American Printing Company, New York, 1950). We have been granted permission to publish from this work the section dealing with Freemasonry. In passing, this section draws heavily on a critique of Freemasonry which appeared in *Ekklesia* (Athens, January, 1934) and which was signed by Archbishop Chrysostom of Athens as president, by sixty-six bishops, and by the secretary. For a copy of the English translation of this critique in *Ekklesia* I am indebted to Rev. Hannah in England. The section from the book by E. A. P'Stephanou, which is a ringing defense of the faith of the Orthodox Church and therefore

contains statements in conflict with the Lutheran confessional point of view, reads, with some minor omissions, as follows:

"After passing through the supreme test and trial of Moslem subjugation, Papal machinations, and Protestant preying, the Orthodox Faith of Christ is finally finding itself face to face with a new adversary called Masonry. It was the end of Turkish rule in the 19th century and the resulting influx of Western culture into the Balkans that brought to the Orthodox East this new danger. If Orthodoxy in predominantly Orthodox countries is finding it a serious problem, it is obvious that the Orthodox Church in America, where Masonry is widespread, should concern herself about it.

"The Masonic Order is as dangerous as it is, owing to the very ignorance that prevails among Orthodox Christians with regard to its true nature and design and because of the popularity and respectability it enjoys, especially, in America. It is a fact much to be deplored that a large number of Orthodox who hold 'prominent' places in the Church are Masons. Still more regrettable is the fact that most of these people of Orthodox Baptism are completely in the dark as to the grave offense they commit in the sight of God and His Holy Church. Perhaps most, if not all, the Orthodox who now are Masons would have avoided Masonry if they had clearly known the real issue involved.¹

1. Attention should be drawn to the following extract from the official pronouncement made in 1933 by the Orthodox Church in Greece against Masonry: "... At first sight it seems as if Masonry is able to be reconciled to any other religion, since it is not concerned with the Church affiliation of its members. By seeking to embrace little by little the entire world into her bosom and by promising that it will provide the moral power and perfection and knowledge of truth, Masonry imperceptibly raises itself into a kind of super-religion, regarding all other religions as inferior, Christianity included. While Christianity is a revealed religion, holding dogma and truths according to reason and above reason and requires faith and bases her moral structure on supernatural divine grace, Masonry holds natural truths alone, to the knowledge of which it calls its initiates through free thinking and inquiry and by the use of reason alone; it founds its ethical structure only on the natural powers of man and is orientated toward purely natural ends. If other Churches have expressed themselves with regard to Masonry, certainly the Orthodox Catholic Church should speak up on this serious matter, being as she is the Church which has preserved the treasure of Christian truth unadulterated. In recent times the Pan-Orthodox Committee, which met at Mount Athos and in which all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches took part, characterized Masonry as a 'deceitful and anti-Christian system.' The faithful children of the Church must keep away from Masonry. Believing firmly in our Lord Jesus Christ, 'in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace' (Eph. 1:2), possessing the truth revealed by Him and preached by the Apostles 'not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and

"We cannot enter into a full discussion of the nature of Masonry here.² Suffice it to say, however, that Masonry trespasses the bounds of the Church by interfering with ethical and religious truths. The very fact that Masonry deals with religion and worship makes it mandatory for the Orthodox to avoid Masonry and all lodges and organizations of a similar character. Religion and ethics is the business of the Church. To insist that one can be an Orthodox in good standing and a Mason at the same time is simply to betray a gross ignorance of the mission and nature of Christ's Church. It is to overlook the truth that the Orthodox Church alone dictates religious and ethical truths.

"To begin with, it is to be remembered that the Church is Christ Himself. It is the one Mystical Body of Christ. . . . Christ clearly stated: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me' (John 14:6). The Church is 'the pillar and ground of truth,' as the Scripture declares. Outside the Church there is error and falsehood. Outside the Church there can be no moral perfection nor brotherhood nor salvation. To the Orthodox, only his fellow orthodox is a brother, properly speaking, inasmuch as Baptism into the Church confers sonship, adoption, and, consequently, brotherhood. To be sure, two people cannot be brothers if they have not the same Father (the Trinitarian God) and the same Mother (the Orthodox Church). Outside the Church there is no real unity or solidarity. Only by receiving from 'one loaf and a common cup' do Christ's faithful remain united in the fellowship of the one Mystical Body of Christ, the Church.

"The Church has an exclusiveness which Christ intended His Church to have. It is this exclusiveness that has preserved it unchanging for two thousand years. To deny this exclusive character to the Church would be tantamount to trying to defeat the scheme of God for man's salvation. It would be out and out blasphemy. Only a thorough understanding of what the Church is can convince one that the Orthodox

power' (1 Cor. 2:4), partaking of the Divine Mysteries whereby we are sanctified and granted eternal life, we feel we must not fall away from the grace of Christ by becoming partakers of strange mysteries. It is not proper that one who belongs to Christ should seek his redemption and moral perfection away from Him. Those who have been implicated with initiation into the Masonic mysteries should hereafter keep away from every contact with Masonic activity, feeling assured that thereby they renew their ties with the Lord and Saviour, which they had broken in ignorance and in a wrong evaluation of things."

2. For detailed information on Masonry by Orthodox writers see P. Kohanik, *Christian-Orthodox Light on Speculative Freemasonry*, 1948, Passaic, N. J.; P. Trembelas, *Theosophy and Masonry*, Athens (in Greek); A. Macrakis, *Masonry*, Athens.

Christian is to avoid all religions and worship of strange groups. Without knowing the true essence of the Church, it would be of no use to even try to discuss the present question.

"It is the unchanging and eternal truth discussed aforesaid that made the Church very early in her life to take measures against those members that dared to hold communion with religions outside the Church. And to this very day, the Church prohibits its members from praying and worshiping in other Churches, Protestant or Roman. On the same grounds, praying and worshiping in Masonic Temples is objectionable. An Orthodox would not think ordinarily of joining a Protestant Church and still consider himself an Orthodox in good standing. Yet, strangely enough, he finds it a simple matter to be a Mason and to call himself a good Orthodox. The fact that Masonry is called a lodge and not a Church can be so deceiving.³

"For the Protestant, Masonry presents no difficulty, since the Protestant concept of the Church differs radically from that of the Orthodox. To the Protestant . . . there is no such thing as a visible Church, that is, a Church you can put your finger on. One Church is about as good as the other. It takes all kinds of churches to make up the one Church. Obviously, therefore, the Protestant feels very much at home in Masonry. Hence, Masonry is, in a certain sense, a pan-Protestant organization. However, to Orthodoxy it is something entirely alien. Masonry is something distinctly outside Orthodox history, tradition, and dogma, and something originally involving the Roman Church and discontented Protestantism, and, as such, does not concern Orthodoxy which had been entirely disassociated with the events surrounding Protestant-Roman relations."⁴

3. Archbishop Chrysostom, then leader of the Church in Greece, made the following addition, which likewise merits attention: ". . . Clergymen who join the Masonic Order deserve to be deposed. This must be made clear. It must be pointed out to those who have joined Masonry without examining what it really is, that they must break every bond with that organization, since Christianity alone is the religion which teaches absolute truth and satisfies the religious and moral needs of men."
4. In 1932 Metropolitan Antony of the Russian-speaking Orthodox Church made the following statement: ". . . It is forbidden to all Orthodox Christians to become Freemasons. All Clergy are duty-bound to question those who come to Confession whether they are members of Masonic Orders, and in case it will appear that they are Masons and believe and share Masonic teachings, they should be informed that membership in the Masonic organization is incompatible with Orthodox Christianity, and that such should immediately resign from Masonry, otherwise they will be deemed unworthy to receive the Holy Communion and their further impenitency will bring to them excommunication from the Orthodox Church."

In view of the above findings, I cannot but close these observations on the Church in its relation to Freemasonry and related orders on a hortatory note. The lodge problem has been with us since the very beginnings of our Synod. Walther attacked it in early issues of *Der Lutheraner*, and Wyneken attacked it during his ministry in Baltimore. Throughout all these years God has given our Church many understanding and patient pastors who fearlessly and persistently testified against the lodge evil. We need to thank God for this blessing. We must not in these latter days of the Church blunt or silence our testimony. May we exhort one another "per mutuam colloquium et consolationem fratrum" (*Smalcald Articles, Triglott*, p. 490), as Luther put it, and may we leave the results of our witness to the Lord of the Church. We have the assurance that His Word never returns to Him void but accomplishes that for which it is sent. May we, in the fear of God, continue to confess the whole truth which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

P. M. B.

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION MEETING

The February issue of the *Lutheran Quarterly* is to a large degree a memorial to the late Dr. C. S. Michelfelder. Dr. C. Bergendoff, the editor, did this, by publishing the relevant documents prepared for the respective sections of the Hannover convention of the Lutheran World Federation. Dr. Michelfelder had been busily at work since the fall of 1947 in planning and preparing the forthcoming meeting at Hannover. He was largely responsible for outlining the work and assigning the specific studies to the respective commissions. Of the many documents which have come out of these various studies the study prepared by Commission I is undoubtedly the most significant, since it lays the foundation for the convention's theme: "The Living Word in a Responsible World." Other studies deal with such topics as missions, ecumenical problems, youth work, welfare work. The various commissions submitted their studies in preliminary drafts to pastors and theological faculties, including Concordia Seminary, for suggestions and criticisms. Subcommittees of the various commissions are now carefully studying these and will embody necessary changes in the final drafts. In reply to our faculty's somewhat detailed critique of the report of Commission I, Dr. Lund-Quist, the newly appointed executive secretary of L. W. F., informed our faculty a few days ago that "Professors Bring, Elert, and Prenter [members of Commission I, meeting in Lund, March 3 and 4] all made specific mention of the fact that the contribution of your committee was as constructively helpful and important as any of the contributions received from other parts of the world. They agreed that your

comments were valid, to the point, and entirely appropriate. They expressed the wish that in the Section at Hannover your representatives would in the same spirit contribute their viewpoints and comments to make the study even more valuable."

The readers of this journal who will want to follow the proceedings at Hannover this summer will wish to order this memorial number (75 cents) and to study the various L. W. F. documents. They may do this by addressing: The Lutheran Quarterly, Seminary Hill, Gettysburg, Pa.

F. E. M.

"UN-LUTHERAN FUNDAMENTALISM"

As is known to many, Dr. Hermann Sasse, now professor of theology in Australia, publishes *Letters to Pastors*, in which he seeks to analyze problems facing the Lutheran Church today. Some of these letters have been translated and published in the *Theological Quarterly* (*Quartalschrift*) of the Wisconsin Synod. In the issue of January, 1952, one of the editors explains why Nos. XIV and XVI of the series, treating of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and No. XX, discussing the confession and theology of the Missouri Synod, were not touched upon. The editor takes issue with Professor Sasse on several points of his doctrine of inspiration. One point is that "the absolute inerrancy of the Bible is not recognized [by Dr. Sasse] as a doctrine of Scripture, but at best as merely a theological opinion." Another point is that Dr. Sasse stigmatizes Missouri's position on inspiration as an "un-Lutheran fundamentalism," as, for example, in the statement which we quote from the *Quarterly's* English translation: "It is quite possible in the Missouri Synod to conquer the un-Lutheran fundamentalism which today is the great danger of that church" ("*dass es in der Missouri-Synode durchaus moeglich ist, den unlutherischen Fundamentalismus zu ueberwinden, der heute die grosse Gefahr dieser Kirche ist*"). In rebuttal, the editor writes: "The author . . . fails to consider that while Reformed fundamentalism will undoubtedly treat this truth as an *a priori* axiom, sound Lutheranism not only can, but will uphold this same conviction, but solely for the sake of the Savior and the salvation which He has wrought." Again: "It [the charge of un-Lutheran fundamentalism] constitutes a most unfortunate condemnation of the conservative cause. . . . For this means that the teachings of Dr. Pieper in his *Christian Dogmatics*, of Dr. Engelder in his *The Scriptures Cannot Be Broken*, of the *Brief Statement*, with its staunch statement on inspiration, are all stigmatized as 'un-Lutheran fundamentalism.' We know well that the defense of a conservative position against the inroads of liberalism involves the constant

danger of falling into legalism and traditionalism. But we are not ready to concede that a personal acceptance, confession, and defense of the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is *per se* an 'un-Lutheran fundamentalism.' It can and, we hope, always will be for us a joyful conviction and confession, one that we hold because of the assurance given us by One whom we have learned to love and trust as our Savior and Lord."

While the distinction between Reformed Fundamentalism and Lutheranism on the doctrine of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy must be maintained, a remark by Dr. H. Hamann in the *Australasian Theological Review* (September, 1951), in connection with some other subject, may be fitly applied also at this point: "We read of 'a decided horror of Fundamentalism'; of 'the dreaded specter of Fundamentalism and orthodoxy.' We do not propose to enter into these questions here, but 'If it is so, it is a grievous fault.' For there is a fundamentalism and a Fundamentalism; and one suspects and fears that the outcry against Fundamentalism is in reality directed, at least to some extent, against fundamentalism" (p. 94). The difference between Fundamentalism and fundamentalism, which Dr. Hamann here has in mind, is that while the former represents a Reformed viewpoint and approach, the latter means simply that faithfulness to whatever the inspired and inerrant Scriptures clearly teach which has always characterized genuine Christian believers. But there is another point involved in Dr. Hamann's contention. Also to the teaching of Scripture concerning its inspiration and inerrancy applies what has been called the *autopistia* of the Bible, namely, that by virtue of its divine authority Scripture demands both faith in, and obedience to, its teachings; and that the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum* engenders in the believer that *fides divina* which assures him that all teachings of the divine Word are true. It must not be forgotten that Scripture has a definite doctrine regarding its divine inspiration and inerrancy and that the assurance of the truth of this doctrine is in the end the effect of the witness of the Holy Spirit through the Word. Those who assert this truth are not Fundamentalists, but sincere Christians, who believe the Word of God. It is well that Dr. Hamann directs our attention to this simple but important truth.

J. T. MUELLER

ROMAN, NOT CATHOLIC

Under this heading, *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Vol. 108; No. 432) publishes a severe indictment of the Roman Catholic Church, which, among other things, shows the great enmity which Romanism of late has caused among Protestants by both its ecclesiastical and political pro-

nunciamentos. The article begins with the words: "If any church or denomination has less right than another to the name catholic it is the Roman Church. It is surely an extravagant imprudence for any denomination to claim that it is catholic, to the exclusion of all others." The accusation culminates in the paragraph: "The fact is that the Roman Church has long since ceased to belong to the apostolic church, for she has become a religious monstrosity, reaching her present deformity by accretions of error through the past ages. Everyone conversant with the growth of Romanism knows it to be a system made up of teachings and practices which had no place in the apostolic church, but which have been added from time to time. Even as late as 1854, as we have seen, the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary was promulgated as an article of the gradually increasing Roman faith and later still, in 1870, the Vatican Council declared the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope to be a dogma of divine revelation, while in 1950, last year, we saw the latest addition when the doctrine of the assumption of Mary was defined. The very process of addition in matters of faith and practice shut the Roman Church off completely from any right whatsoever to the use of the title catholic. In the Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology, edited by the Rev. John Henry Blunt, we are informed that the term catholic, as applied to the church, 'was also used to distinguish those Christians who maintained what had been universally taught from the beginning, from those who added to or detracted from the faith (Ignatius, *Ep. ad Smyrn.*).' Accordingly the Roman Church by her repeated additions excludes and distinguishes herself from 'those Christians who maintain what has been universally taught from the beginning,' and in consequence from any right to the title catholic." Toward the close of his article the writer says: "The title Roman Catholic Church is thus seen to be utterly inconsistent with historical facts. The major part of her present creed was unknown to the primitive church, but is made up of a species of corruption brought in during the centuries past. These innovations have separated the Roman Church from the apostolic church and old catholic fathers, as Bishop Jewel said, in consequence of which she has forfeited all claim to the title catholic. Having thus separated herself from the true church by departure from the faith the only safe course for Romanists to take, if they would be safe, is as Bishop Jewel observed, to come out from their communion and return to the purity of the Word of God and loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ, as exemplified in the apostolic church." One wonders why *Bibliotheca Sacra* still clings to the premillennial tenet that the

coming of Antichrist must be expected at the close of this world era when the continuing and ever increasing corruption of Romanism in faith and practice confirms so strongly the judgment of the Reformers that the Pope is the Antichrist whose coming St. Paul predicted in 2 Thess. 2.

J. T. MUELLER

A PLEA, DESERVING SUPPORT

As is well known, the study of the ancient languages at the theological seminaries in our country is, as a rule, not too popular. Seminary bulletins show that in the majority of our theological schools Hebrew, Greek, and Latin have been placed in the group of seminary electives and that large numbers of students are being graduated who do not have even a smattering of the languages in which the Word of God has been given to mankind. One is led to ask: How will the Gospel of Christ fare when Protestant ministers no longer are able to assure themselves of what the Scriptures really teach in the original texts? We believe that the following earnest plea, published in the *Australasian Theological Review* (September, 1951), deserves serious attention also in America. We read: "The reader is asked to look upon these sentences [preceding the plea proper] not as mere statements of facts, but as an earnest plea. We have been able in the past to build up a sound theological training on a good basis. We should not like to see the foundation weakened. Unfortunately, there are indications of reluctance on the part of some students to devote themselves energetically and with conviction to the study of the ancient tongues. Still more unfortunately, there are indications that some ministers, instead of correcting such tendencies and aiding the faculty in maintaining present standards, exert their influence in the other direction by belittling the importance of linguistic studies and thus confirming students in their negative attitude. The thing can be done with an ease that is almost ridiculous. A minister need but say: 'I have never read a word of Latin or Greek or Hebrew (and possibly German) since I left the seminary; and yet I got along perfectly well in the ministry.' This is a sorry *testimonium paupertatis*, to be sure, but it may leave a fatal impression upon minds already prepossessed against the strenuous intellectual efforts required to achieve some competence or mastery in the languages. Such remarks are all the more deplorable in view of the smallness of our church. What is said to a few is not said 'in the ear'; it is as though spoken into a megaphone or microphone. A fairly general conviction that the ancient languages do not matter will neutralize the best and most desperate efforts of teachers and will, in the long run, defeat all endeavors

to keep theological instruction and training at the present level, or to raise that level if possible. Long ago, Dr. Martin Luther wrote: '*So lieb als uns das Evangelium ist, so hart lasst uns ueber den Sprachen halten.*'"

J. T. MUELLER

PERUSE THE "ECUMENICAL REVIEW"

The *Ecumenical Review* published by the World Council of Churches at Geneva is probably the most cosmopolitan journal of our day. The journal has headquarters in all parts of the world, and its contributors come from all sections of the universal Christian Church. Few journals are in a position to offer their readers reviews of such a wide variety of theological books from practically every part of the world as this review. In order to do justice to all volumes sent in for review, the *Ecumenical Review* usually groups a number of related books under a common heading and reviews them jointly. In the January issue, for example, six important books are listed under the heading "Creative Theological Thought in America." Under the heading "The Church and Science in Germany" a total of 15 volumes are listed showing the relation between the Church and the various sciences, such as political science, medicine, jurisprudence, economics. The field of evangelism is covered by nine titles, six in English and two in French and one in Dutch. Under "God in History" one American and three German studies are listed. It is suggested that pastors who wish to follow current trends in ecumenical thought stop at their public library and peruse the *Ecumenical Review*.

F. E. M.

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

The British Columbia Catholic Education Association presented to all political parties in British Columbia a plan to integrate Roman Catholic and other separate schools into the British Columbia public school system, designed to do away with the contentious separate school question and provide the same rights and privileges of education to all groups. . . . The proposed plan provides for a consolidated public school system with inspection of Catholic schools by officials of the Department of Education, grants for teachers' salaries, health services, including dental and medical care, free textbooks and bus transportation. The religious training is to be given, when requested, in all grades of the schools either before or after the regular hours; it would be provided by the religious organizations without cost to the public school authorities, other than the provision of school facilities. . . . The resolution points out that although minority groups are not recognized as part of the public school system, they "have long been recognized by the people

and by the Education Department as a part of the educational system by the extension to such schools of matriculation examinations and free textbooks"; all children should receive equal services from the Education Department and school boards and should not be discriminated against because of conscientious convictions on the part of parents that religious teachings should form part of their children's daily education; *but* in several municipalities minority groups pay public school taxes for which they receive no return whatever and in addition pay the costs of operating their own schools. It commends the adoption of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which states that education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages, and that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given their children. . . . RNS notes: "If the resolution is carried, it will be a major victory for Catholic groups which have waged a militant campaign, particularly during the past year, for equal rights with other taxpayers in the matter of education." . . . In submitting the plan to the political parties the Catholic Association delivered an ultimatum to support the proposals or face political action.

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A campaign to counteract ignorance of the Bible has been launched by the United Lutheran Church in America. Said Dr. Ruff, editor of *The Lutheran*: "The tragic casualty of our time is the Bible. Evidence indicates that even faithful church people have less knowledge of the Book now than at any time, perhaps, since the Reformation. This is partly due to the fact that we are in the midst of a great cultural change. The history of the half-century is from AV to AV—Authorized Version to audio-visuals. The reading of books has become the antiquated pastime of a minority. Devices in teaching are never equal to the Word itself. We must fling the full weight of the Church back of the effort to get people to read the Bible, study it and apply it to their daily lives as they let God speak to them through its pages." . . . The theme set for 1952 is "The Bible in Daily Living." The program includes distribution of Bibles, Bible-reading kits, Bible exhibits, book corners in local congregations, and the showing of feature films and filmstrips. The 13 colleges of the Church have been asked to emphasize Bible courses during the year.

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In Fruitland, Idaho, the members of the Church of the Brethren held a banquet without food to raise money for the Relief for India fund. The "diners" paid the price of a regular meal but fasted instead while they listened to a program describing the plight of Indians starving in famine areas.

Students at the three Lutheran seminaries in the Twin Cities are offered practical courses at hospitals similar to those which may be taken by the students of Concordia Seminary at Barnes Hospital, St. Louis, Mo. The institutions referred to are Augsburg Seminary (Lutheran Free Church), Northwestern Lutheran Seminary (United Lutheran Church in America), both in Minneapolis, and Luther Seminary (Evangelical Lutheran Church) in St. Paul.

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In the Council Chamber of the City Hall in Dublin, Ireland, a crucifix was erected, just one thousand years after the first cross was raised in Dublin. The first cross stood at a spot near the City Hall until 300 years ago.

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The Protestant Bill of Rights Committee, organized by Lutheran Men in America in Wisconsin, has protested against the paying of tax support of 14 public schools near Durand, Wis., which they charge "are under the domination" of the Roman Catholic Church, among them the Lima consolidated grade school, with about 200 pupils, which is taught by nuns. The school is operated by the Holy Rosary Catholic Church, and the principal of the school is a nun. The controversy broke out when the last remaining small school was consolidated with the Lima school over the objections of a few Protestants in the area. One of these Protestants refused to send his children to the school and was charged with causing truancy. His trial is pending in the Eau Claire County circuit court; he is defended by the Bill of Rights Committee. . . . The State was asked by the Committee to "refrain from recognizing these 14 schools as public schools for any purpose whatever and refrain from certifying them as public schools for the allocation of public funds or any other benefits to which public schools are entitled."

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An executive order governing the compulsory work to be performed by conscientious objectors in lieu of military service under the draft has been signed by President Truman. The order will channel much of their work into programs of religious and charitable organizations. Only work performed for governmental bodies or for non-profit organizations engaged in charitable or public welfare work will be considered suitable alternative service for COs to perform. . . . The executive order has the effect of law, since Congress, in amending the draft act in 1951 to require alternative civilian work by COs, left it up to the President to prescribe the regulations under which the program is to operate. The order is effective immediately, though it will take some time for local

boards to process their Class 1-O registrants and get them into actual work assignments. More than 5,000 men will be affected. . . . Work appropriate for this purpose is defined as follows in the President's order:

"(1) Employment by the United States Government, or by a State, Territory, or possession of the United States, or a political subdivision thereof, or by the District of Columbia;

"(2) Employment by a non-profit organization, association, or corporation which is primarily engaged either in a charitable activity conducted for the benefit of the general public or in carrying out a program for the improvement of the public health or welfare, including educational and scientific activities in support thereof, when such activity or program is not principally for the benefit of the members of such organization, association or corporation, or for increasing the membership thereof."

The order is designed to avoid as much as possible the atmosphere of compulsion by encouraging volunteering. Primary responsibility for the selection of a work assignment is placed on the objector himself. After he has been put through the normal draft processing, except for the final step of induction into the Armed Forces, he is directed to submit to his local board a list of three types of civilian work which he is willing to perform. If the local board deems any of these appropriate, it will order the registrant to do it. If not, then the board will submit its own list of three types of work. Within ten days the registrant will either offer to perform one of these or decline to do so. If they cannot come to an agreement, the State Director of Selective Service or his representative shall meet with the objector and the local board to find an amicable agreement. Only if even this meeting fails, the local board, with the approval of the national Director of Selective Service, may exercise its arbitrary authority to order the registrant to perform a specified form of civilian work. . . . Several other "sore points" of World War II experience are removed. One is the question of compensation. Objectors then were not paid for their work, resulting in hardship for their dependents. The new program assumes that they will receive the prevailing wage for such work as they do. . . . The new program will permit work in mental hospitals which met with wide approval in the last war, also in forest-fire fighting, agricultural research, and other such programs.

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The National Production Authority has given blanket approval to 446 churches and religious bodies to start new construction valued at \$101,647,000 in the second half of 1952 — all projects for which appli-

cation was made prior to February 15, 1952, and some for which authorization had been denied for the first and second quarters of this year. . . . At the same time the NPA approved all pending projects for orphanages and homes for the aged, numbering 32, and 29 applications by the YMCA and the YWCA.

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The Belgrade Radio announced that a Yugoslav Communist worker has been given a suspended 10-day sentence and put on probation for a year as a leader of the mob attack in January on the Roman Catholic Bishop Anton Vour of Ljnlbljana. The bishop was severely burned when a crowd of men and boys attacked him in a railway station at Novomesto, poured gasoline on his clothes, and set them afire. — They evidently believe in severe punishment of such practical jokes!

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The Tito government has served notice on Roman Catholic and Serbian Orthodox authorities that their theological faculties in Yugoslav universities will be banned after the close of the current academic term in June. Government authorities explained, however, that the order did not abolish theological training in Yugoslavia, since the churches were free to continue such training at their own expense.

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The American Home Bible League in Chicago announced a collection of 100,000 used Bibles for distribution around the world as its 1952 goal. William A. Chapman, president and founder of the League, said: "Many of the families across America have three or four copies of the Scriptures. The demand for them from other countries is increasing day by day."

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Representatives of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern), and the United Presbyterian Church met in Washington, D.C., to revise and edit the preliminary draft of a plan for reunion. The draft plan evolved contemplates the eventual merger of the three denominations. It will be presented to a meeting of the three denominational commissions and committees in March. After further revision of the document it will be presented to the General Assemblies of the three Churches in May and June, who then will send it down to the presbyteries for study and criticism. There is "no thought of asking for a vote on the plan at the General Assemblies this year." Actual merger, if it comes about, would probably not occur in less than four to five years.

A photographic expedition to Bible lands was launched in Pasadena, Calif., with the departure of an Old Testament scholar, Dr. William Sanford LaSor of Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, and William Brusseau, a motion-picture producer of Santa Monica. They are going to the Near East with the aim of producing a sound and color film of archaeological discoveries bearing on the Scriptures. Westminster Films, which produces sacred and educational visual aids, is sponsoring the expedition. Mr. Brusseau is president of the company. THEO. HOYER

CONCLUDING POSTSCRIPTS

When some 2,500 music lovers entered the lobby of Kiel Auditorium, St. Louis, the evening of March 8 to hear Dr. Wm. B. Heyne's Bach Chorus perform, to the accompaniment of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, they got more than they had bargained for. They heard an introductory Bach concert free of charge. There in the lobby sat the nationally known Collinsville High School Band and played under the direction of its competent leader a group of Bach's most beautiful harmonizations of chorales beginning with the Queen of Chorales, "How Lovely Shines the Morning Star," and concluding with the King of Chorales, "Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying." Entranced by this faith-affirming music, the lovers of Bach's music quietly took their places in the vast auditorium and listened with bated breath to a next-to-perfect performance of the *Mass*, then went home, again assured that there is no music in the entire repertoire of sacred music which matches the sublime art of the Lutheran composer Johann Sebastian Bach.

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"The Modern Theatre as a Theological Matter" is the heading of an item in the LWF News Release of December 10, 1951. We believe the item to be of sufficient value to pass it on. It reads:

"The modern theatre is a highly Christian affair; like the Gospel it takes human responsibility seriously. But there is no such thing as a Christian theatre that can proclaim the Gospel from the stage." With these words the Lutheran dramatic author and critic Heinz Fluegel took his stand against well-meant but ill-advised attempts at renewing the so-called Christian drama, in a lecture on the theology of the theatre which he held in Hamburg during a week dedicated to the theme of Church and Art. "All such attempts," he continued, "are condemned to mediocrity. They falsely suppose that since our theatre stems from the drama of antiquity and the mystery-plays of the Middle Ages, modern stage-plays are predestined to be a parallel to church services.

But there is no real parallel to the liturgy. At the most, certain sacred plays that are performed in churches, before the altar, can give what the liturgy gives: not merely an 'image' but a present reality in which the spectators participate as a congregation.

"In the theatre the relation between the stage and the spectator is quite different," said Fluegel. "Between the fiction presented on the stage and the real life of the spectator there is a distance that does not exist in the liturgy. Besides, the Church's worship leaves no room for hostility to God. Yet man's doubt or even hostility against God are the foundations of real drama.

"Hence all attempts at bringing sacred 'liturgical' drama to life again must be considered an absurdity. The modern theatre is not a sanctuary but a place of judgment, and contemporary drama is the judgment's poetic expression.

"On the stage," Heinz Fluegel concluded, "we expect the guilty to be executed as if mercy and grace did not exist. The theatre can never give a direct Christian message to comfort men."

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Nostalgic memories of the Bach concert referred to above bring to mind the passing of Professor Henry C. Gaertner (June 19, 1869, to March 7, 1952), who for many years taught principally music at our Teachers College in River Forest. Professor Gaertner was an enthusiastic admirer of Bach's music and gave much of his time and effort to organize and promote the Chicago Bach Society. But Professor Gaertner was also a devoted member of our Synod. Due to his extensive reading in the synodical reports, he had a rare grasp of the distinctive doctrines of the Lutheran Church. He also read the Bible with unflinching regularity and over the years acquired insights into the Scriptures which often astounded his listeners. But Professor Gaertner was, above all, a devout child of God. In the many trials of his long life he frequently gave evidence of his unfeigned faith for which his colleagues and students often envied him. As long as our Church has devout men teaching at our seminaries and colleges like Professor Gaertner, our Church will have what Walther prayed for, "*ein frommes Ministerium*" and, we add, "*eine fromme Lehrerschaft*."

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The *Martin Luther-Bund*, an organization of devoted Lutherans in Germany whose great objective has been for many years to provide physical and spiritual relief to Lutherans living in dispersion, is again engaged in an active program. From its bulletin (March) it is evident

that this society is determined to promote the pure Gospel and genuine loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions. We quote:

"There are in Germany Lutheran regional churches. There is the United Evangelical Lutheran Church. But do we have everywhere Lutheran ministers and congregations who are firmly grounded in the faith of the fathers? There are in Germany Lutheran free churches. But are these always ready to make full use of the power which is theirs—though it be small—in the interest of the whole of Lutheranism? For this is the most important work of the *Martin Luther-Bund*, to be of service so that in this day of confessional laxity and vagueness both in the state churches and in the free churches men might gather who will hold more firmly to the pure Gospel and to the confessions of our Lutheran fathers. Men at the same time who are not satisfied merely to possess these treasures but who are ready also to share them with others in their home and in the dispersion."

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According to reports from overseas, the 1952 *Kirchentag* arranged by lay members of the Evangelical churches of Germany will be held the latter part of August in Stuttgart. The general theme will be "Choose Life!" This theme will be discussed under the following five subtopics: 1) "Life in the Church" (What is the church? How can the church become one's spiritual home?); 2) "Life in the Family" (How can the marriage bond be kept unbroken? What do we mean when we say that our children are coming of age?); 3) "Life in the Nation" (What is the relation of Christians to politics? How are we to interpret the future of our country?); 4) "Life in Labor" (Who owns industry? Who determines leisure hours?); 5) "Life in the Village" (Will the village continue? Will the church remain in the village?). The above theme was announced in his New Year's message by D. Dr. von Thadden, president of the *Kirchentag*. Dr. Thadden has recently toured our country.

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In a small 32-page booklet titled *The Minister's Library* (London, Church Book Room Press, Ltd., 1948), which contains some exceedingly helpful annotations on recent theological books, Frank Colquhoun, editor, reminds the English clergy to give due attention to reading. His observations have relevance also for the American clergy. We quote: "It is nothing less than a tragedy when a man abandons serious reading when he leaves his theological college—apart, that is, from whatever minimum of study may be necessary to aid him in the prepara-

tion of the weekly sermons or occasional addresses. No one will deny that it is all too easy to be overwhelmed with the incessant demands of parochial and extra-parochial activities; but such a situation demands the strictest vigilance with regard to the discipline of time. For a clergyman to admit that he has no time for reading is to confess to dismal failure on at least one level of his ministerial life. It is impossible to resist asking: What are the things of greater importance for which time can be found?

"When a parish priest can find time for every petty duty and fussy detail of the parochial round and yet can find no time for private study, it is surely not uncharitable to suggest that he needs to overhaul his whole conception of the pastoral office and to inquire whether, as in the sight of God, he is putting first things first. It may seriously be questioned whether he is being faithful to his ordination vows. We complain on occasions of the ignorance of the laity. If the truth were told, there is cause all too often to lament the ignorance of the clergy. In any case, is not the ignorance of the laity due in large measure to the ignorance of the clergy—or, if not to their ignorance, at any rate to their indolence? One of the biggest needs in the church of to-day is for a genuinely teaching ministry; and a teaching ministry can only be sustained by continuous study."

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The Bible Translator (January) contains a most interesting article on the new revision of the Hungarian Bible. This revision is being done by a Committee of Evangelical scholars and theologians and will bring up to date the famous Kasper Karoly translation of 1590. The work is prosecuted with unremitting zeal and with a consecration which is truly humiliating. Most touching in the report are the following concluding paragraphs:

"The churches have shown a great interest in the work of the Old Testament Commission. A number of Evangelical churches send all kinds of parcels for each week that the Commission meets, so that the Commission is almost entirely fed by the churches during the times when it is in session. Thus the word of Gal. 6:6 is fulfilled to the Commission: Those who are taught in the Word are in fellowship with those who teach them 'in all good things.' The organizer of this love feast, which resembles the early days of Christianity, is Mrs. Lenke Botyánszky, the 'invisible housewife' of the Commission. The parcels often bring touching lines written by rough peasant hands which seldom take up the pen, bringing Bible verses and blessings. The Commission has the assurance that a large unseen praying Church is carrying its

work in faith and this close link with the actual Church strengthens the working power, courage and endurance, joy and conscientiousness of the scholars.

"Finally, a word of testimony. Our Hungarian Evangelical Christianity has passed through the judgment of God, who was gracious to us. God could have obliterated our churches and the light of His Word by the just fulfillment of His judgment. Instead of that we can work in our country day by day on a new revision or translation of the Hungarian Bible, translating one book of the Bible after another and even having it printed — preparing an edition of the Bible which will be a turning point in the history of the Hungarian Bible."

Even as the Word of God is not bound to lofty cathedrals, but can be preached also on the open plain or in shacks made of mud walls and covered with a thatched roof, so the Word of God need not be translated in plush hotel rooms furnished with every comfort and convenience. But the Word of God must be preached, and it must be translated, and the Church needs to support both activities by its prayers and, if necessary, by food packages.

P. M. B.