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## Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

### WHAT IS THE WORD OF GOD?

Dr. J. W. Behnken read the following statement in both English and German to the members of Section I (Theology) of the Lutheran World Federation at Hanover July 29, 1952:

First of all, I would like to take occasion to thank you men of the Lutheran World Federation for inviting a goodly number of us of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to attend the present convention as official visitors. I want to assure you that we appreciate this very much. We were told that we may be given the floor in sectional meetings, and we certainly are grateful for this privilege.

The fact that we are official visitors makes it somewhat embarrassing for me to speak. I do not want to create the impression that I want to intrude on your discussions or that I want to take up some of your valuable time. However, there are some things which are very near to my heart which I have missed in the discussion thus far, and I would like to ask a question or two to arrive at a clear understanding.

I have noted, with great interest, the emphasis placed on the Living Word, on forgiveness and justification solely through Christ, and on faith in Christ as the sinner's only hope. To my knowledge there is no problem with reference to these great truths in our Church. To us, Jesus, the God-Man, the Savior of mankind, is the heart and center of Holy Writ. We emphasize the momentous truths of God's Word again and again. We believe, too, that through the proclamation of these great truths the Spirit of God brings people to faith in Christ, a living faith, a faith which will serve God and the neighbor and will strive to be zealous unto good works.

Jesus means everything to me. Without Him, I, a miserable sinner, would be hopelessly lost. In Him, however, I have forgiveness, peace with God, and assurance of eternal life. Hence I dearly love Jesus. He is my One and All. And it is because of this that I dearly love His Word.

Now my question is this: What is the Word of God? Is it Christ's Person? Is it merely *was Christum treibet*? Are not all parts of the Bible God's Word? When we ask our people about this, they will tell us in all sincerity of heart: The Bible is God's Word. If you ask me, a simple child of God, I will tell you that the Bible in all its parts,



in its every statement, is the Word of God given by inspiration of God, written by holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Ghost. In my youth I learned the hymn in which the words occur:

Das Wort, welch's jetzt in Schriften steht,  
Ist fest und unbeweglich.  
Zwar Himmel und die Erd' vergeht,  
Gott's Word bleibt aber ewig.

Last Sunday I saw the Luther film. I was deeply impressed and strengthened when I saw what I believe is historically correct: Luther pointing at the Bible as the Word of God. I know what the Bible meant to him. I know that *one* word of the Bible made the whole world too narrow for him. I pray God that I may be like him and that when I read a passage in Scripture I may say: "Thus saith the Lord."

My dear friends: you are preparing a theological statement which is to go out into all parts of the world as a proclamation of the Lutheran World Federation, on the Word of God, and which will be read and studied by the lay people in the world. May I inquire in all seriousness whether you should not issue a clear-cut statement in simple language that everyone may understand it, not merely about Jesus, the Living Word, but also about the Word which reveals Him to me, the Bible, the written Word of God? P. M. B.

#### "THE LUTHERAN IN GREAT BRITAIN"

That is the title of a new Lutheran church paper whose first issue appeared July 15, 1952. It is being published by the Lutheran Council of Great Britain (address *The Lutheran*, 493 Oxford Street, London, W. 1.).

An editorial states: "That the term Lutheran and The Lutheran Church are relatively unknown in the British Isles is not due solely to an insularity complex on the part of British Christians. The responsibility rests just as squarely on the shoulders of British Lutheranism, which has never paid real notice to other British Christians." One of the purposes of this new paper is "to present the doctrinal and practical position of British Lutheranism to members of other faiths." If the succeeding issues follow the high level of the first number, the paper should go far toward achieving this aim. The leading article, written by the chairman of the Council, the Rev. E. George Pearce of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, and entitled "The Outlook of Lutheranism," develops clearly and practically the meaning of the three *Sola's* of the Reformation, to whose promulgation and defense the new publication is dedicated. The first number gives



the names and addresses of the fifty-six Lutheran pastors in Britain, serving forty thousand members. There is also a map of London indicating the fifteen Lutheran places of worship in the metropolis. May God richly bless this new project of the British Lutherans.

V.B.

#### THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD AND TELEVISION

When The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod launches its new television series, "This Is the Life," in October, it will be opening a new chapter in modern missionary history. As the Lutheran Hour blazed a trail in radio evangelism more than 20 years ago, so this new and ambitious undertaking of Synod promises to take the lead in Gospel telecasting on a nation-wide basis. "This Is the Life" is a dramatic program built around the everyday experiences of a typical Christian family. It is not a preaching service. In fact, only rarely will the program include a formal presentation of Christian truth by means of the formal sermon or formal lecture. Instead, the truths of the Christian Gospel will become alive as they are presented in a series of episodes designed for the great non-captive television audience.

The primary target audience in this venture are the millions of Americans who have not been brought to faith in Christ. The various episodes are designed to present the Christian life as winsomely as possible and to interpret the basic truths of the Christian life in terms which are understandable to the average unchurched family sitting in its living room. Among those who see a great future for "This Is the Life" are the members of the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

This is an entirely new device in teaching and will require the best talents and especially the Lord's direction, lest the undertaking lose sight of the Church's one great task, to teach the entire counsel of God, the true nature of sin, the grace of God in the Person and work of our divine Redeemer, justification and sanctification. The Gospel is always foolishness to men, and the temptation to water down the Gospel to mere moralism or sentimental emotionalism is an ever-present danger. If the programs serve as church bells to invite the unchurched, they will serve a glorious purpose, will open new doors to the Gospel, and place new and glorious responsibilities on God's peculiar people chosen to be His witnesses.

F.E.M.

#### "THE VERDICT MUST REMAIN: 'NON LIQUET'"

In the *Hibbert Journal* (April, 1952) Prof. R. G. Lunt of Liverpool College reviews C. Leslie Mitton's *The Epistle to the Ephesians*



(O.U.P. Pp.277, 6 appendices. 30s). In his book, originally a doctor's dissertation, Dr. Mitton endeavors to demonstrate the proposition that Paul cannot be regarded as the author of Ephesians. In this, Reviewer Lunt supports him, though he propounds this theory: "My solution, for what it is worth, is that it [Ephesians] is in substance Paul's; I can conceive of its being a homily delivered in Rome to a group of his friends. Perhaps it was not dictated quite as the Epistles were, but was taken down more as a reporter takes down a speech or a sermon." He concludes his discussion with the words: "Dr. Mitton's case is well argued: the anti-Pauline evidence is cogent. But the verdict must remain: *Non liquet*." What moves Professor Lunt to this decision? His consideration of Dr. Mitton's arguments shows the predicament in which the critics of the Bible find themselves as they attack the traditional church assumptions. Dr. Lunt writes:

"Supposing that we do go all the way with Dr. Mitton and agree that the Epistle cannot have come from Paul's pen, where are we then? Are not the difficulties that ensue even greater than those from which we seek escape? We are asked to conjure up in the sub-apostolic age a faithful disciple of Paul, who will on the one hand most cleverly put together a rehash of the master's teaching, expanding it to meet present needs and adding some very profound ideas of his own, and yet on the other hand will misunderstand some of the master's favorite words and use them in a sense quite other than his. So conscientious an imitator would not have made such blatant mistakes, and one capable of such mistakes would not be likely to be so very successful in representing his original. We are asked to believe that he was a Gentile, yet because he was assuming the person of the master he speaks of himself as a Jew and addresses Gentiles as 'you that were far off,' and although he explains and simplifies certain Jewish ideas, he yet introduces without explanation or precedent the very expressive figure of 'the middle wall of partition.' This imitator, it is further claimed, so wrote himself into the part that he builds up the details of Paul's imprisonment from other letters, but then lapses into his own person, with his references to 'the holy apostles and prophets' (II:20 and III:5), and to himself as 'the least of all the saints' (III:8). (The root-difficulty seems to be the combination of arguments which like the hydra has too many heads. (1) If Ephesians is unlike Paul—which it is—then it must be by another hand. (2) If it is like Paul—which it is shown to be—then it must be by an imitator.) The statistics adduced are indeed impressive, but can literary criticism be reduced to statistics?



"The more the internal evidence is considered, the more difficult is it to ascribe Ephesians to Paul. The more the alternatives are considered, the most unlikely does each become. There is a real impasse here. If it is by a Pauline imitator, it is—despite the fashion of pseudonymity prevailing in those times—almost an audacious parody. 'The hypothesis of an absolutely unknown theologian of so high an order in the second century,' wrote Bishop J. W. Hunkin, 'is not one to be lightly adopted.' Ephesians may fit ill with the rest of the Pauline corpus, but when we come to compare it with other pseudonymous works, the contrast between it and them is very much greater. The position is well summed up by A. D. Nock: 'Ephesians, though not by Paul, is Pauline: the Pastorals as a whole are not.'

"I find the brilliance and serenity of Ephesians even more inexplicable if we place it in the sub-apostolic period than if we, despite all the difficulties, give it its traditional date—at the end of Paul's life during the imprisonment at Rome. It certainly does not fit with Paul the writer that we know; but then it is a type of composition that we do not know. For it is a homily, rather than a letter, and as such it is unique (p. 14). The trappings of the Letter in which it is dressed, I should regard as unauthentic, being appended at beginning and end to bring this work into line with the rest."

J. T. MUELLER

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Representatives of the 16,000 Greek Orthodox in Israel—nearly one half of the country's Arab Christians—held their first national conference at Nazareth. . . . Provisions were made for better service of the communities remote from Jerusalem, the seat of the Patriarch Timothy. An additional motive for this action is found in the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church in Israel has been making efforts to draw Greek Orthodox into its fold.

. . .

The Czechoslovak Minister of Education, Zdenek Nejedly, has announced in Vienna that parents wishing to have their children attend religious instruction classes must file a special application with the Communist authorities. . . . The announcement came shortly after the Minister, in a speech, had bitterly attacked the Roman Catholic Church, making it clear that he thought the chief virtue of the Communist regime is that it protects youth from the "snares of the Vatican." Children, he said, "must be educated in the Communist spirit and taken care of spiritually while they are still young, while their mind resembles a clean blackboard on which all can be written,



and when the child is grateful for each piece of attention. Kindergartens are my special pride; we take the child at the age of three, lead him by the hand until the age of six, and then turn him over to the care of the teacher in primary schools. In this way the child is given a firm basis for a good life, dedicated to Socialism." . . . The education minister's action, coupled with the current violent attacks on the Church, is interpreted as a sign of the Czech government's concern over the increasing attendance at churches and religious instruction classes in schools.

The Diocesan Promotion Committee of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Maine has prepared maps showing the location of every parish, mission, and summer mission in the State of Maine, and listing on the reverse side the hours of service in each parish as well as the name, address, and phone number of the rector. These maps are available at the Maine Publicity Bureau offices on the major highways; also parish churches and chambers of commerce throughout the State are distributing them.

From New Delhi, India, comes the report that Parliament has amended the Indian Christian Marriage Act of 1872 to raise the marital age for Christian males from 16 to 18 years and of females from 13 to 16. . . . Although child marriages are not so prevalent among Christian Indians as among Hindus, it was found that even among Christians early marriage was sometimes encouraged, particularly in rural areas; hence the above act which brings the regulations governing Christian marriages into conformity with those for non-Christians established recently by the Child Marriage Restraint Act.

The Vatican Radio reports that the Communist government of Poland has ordered the closing of all Catholic orphanages in the country. A spokesman for the Polish regime was quoted as saying the reason for the action was that "education given in these institutes does not correspond with the requirements of the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist era."

The eighth national convention of the Youth for Christ International at Winona Lake, Ind., attended by 4,000 delegates from 42 States, five Canadian provinces, and ten foreign countries, adopted a record \$760,000 budget for next year, \$190,000 higher than last year. . . . The president, Dr. Robert A. Cook of Chicago, outlined plans for a youth crusade which, he said, would use 10,000 Christian young



people, each reaching 100 of his classmates or friends in the next 12 months. . . . Tokyo was selected as the site for the sixth World Congress on Evangelism to be held next year.

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The facilities of Washington (Episcopal) Cathedral in Washington, D. C., are used by a Reform Jewish congregation and a Russian Orthodox group. The Temple Sinai Congregation (Rabbi Balfour Brickner) worships in the cathedral's Bethlehem Chapel each Friday evening; the Russian Orthodox group holds Sunday services in the Chapel of the Resurrection. . . . Dean Francis B. Sayre, Jr., said that during the Jewish services the cross on the altar will be replaced by an Ark of Israel containing parchment scrolls of the first five books of the Old Testament.

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The Vatican Radio reports that Chinese Communist authorities have ordered Roman Catholics of the Tingchow diocese, Fukien Province, to alter the prayers of the mass by omitting the name of the Pope.

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In La Vega, Texas, a rapidly growing and prosperous community on the outskirts of Waco, 500 parents signed a 26-page petition charging the school superintendent with running the town's school system "like a Baptist parochial institution." Parents claimed that teachers and students were forced to attend religious sessions that were mainly "Baptist-style"; that three Roman Catholic students got failing grades because they did not attend a Baptist convention at Baylor University; also that students of Latin-American descent were discriminated against.—The serious part of the matter is that this isolated instance will be used by certain parties as defense for their own actions; and—"What's sauce for the goose. . . ."

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Three American women are spending a year in the wilds of New Guinea, Borneo, and Australia's bush country recording on tape the reading of Bible passages by natives of those regions. These readings are then processed on phonograph disks in the United States and sent back to the natives free of charge. Tribal or community groups who do not have a phonograph or other reproduction device will be supplied one, postage free, at a nominal charge of \$10. . . . The undertaking is sponsored by Gospel Recordings, Inc., a Los Angeles, Calif., concern. The three ladies are Joy Ridderhof, Sanna Barlow, and Ann



Sherwood. . . . We are told that hearing their own voices and those of friends has "an astonishing effect" on primitive people. "One South American Indian tribe that we recorded has built a church around their Gospel machine and worships at it every Sunday."

The Czechoslovak Baptist Convention of America and Canada now has twice as many members on its foreign mission field as it has in its home churches—thus the report at their annual meeting in Minneapolis, Minn. There are about 6,000 members on their mission field in Haiti (a field taken over when the Communists closed the door to further work in Czechoslovakia) and about 3,000 members in their 30 churches in the United States and Canada. These 3,000 members contributed \$10,000 to support four missionaries in Haiti, three in Canada, and three in the United States.

Third honors in the "Stalin Prize" for 1952 was won by Dimitri Eremin for his novel "Storm over Rome," in which Pope Pius XII is depicted as rushing around in his own automobile, violating all traffic rules and abusing policemen who want to fine him. The Pope is charged with "organizing the brutal suppression of a revolution of starved workers, rendered unemployed by the decision of Wall Street to close down all Italian factories and eliminate competition to American products." Again, when the picture of Stalin appears on the Grand Canal in Venice, "a reverent hush descends upon the assembled multitude, which then bursts into an indescribable manifestation of joy."

Plans are being made by Protestants and Roman Catholics in India to celebrate the 1,900th anniversary of the arrival of St. Thomas in India. Tradition has it that the Apostle Thomas founded the Christian Church in India A. D. 52 and that he was put to death in the Malabar region A. D. 58. The churches have set the week of Nov. 16 to 23 for the main celebration, which is to take place at Kerala on the Malabar coast.

Plans were launched in Hannover, Germany, for the publication of a Lutheran World Encyclopedia that will serve as an international reference work "embracing the entire cycle of Lutheran interests, doctrine, and action. The proposal won unanimous approval from the Lutheran World Federation's Assembly. The Federation's executive committee was authorized to find ways and means to finance the project, which, it is estimated, will take seven years to complete. . . . The



encyclopedia will consist of two 800-page volumes, containing a total of 2,560,000 words. Contents of the volumes will include articles on theology, history and biography, polity, liturgy, church activities such as missions, publications, education, etc., ecumenical relationships, and statistics. . . . Cost of producing the manuscript will be about \$40,000 to be provided by the Federation, which, however, will not undertake responsibility for the cost of publication, estimated at upwards of \$55,000 for 10,000 sets, but will offer the manuscript to publishers without charge. The encyclopedia will first be published in English and German.

A Catholic paper, *The Indiana Catholic Record*, of Indianapolis, raises its voice against "religious gadgetry." "Here is a field," said the paper, "where the American talent for invention has begun to operate with deplorable results. The rosary clicker is as yet a primitive machine which must be worked by hand; the possibilities of electrifying its action, of electronically amplifying the clicks, inserting hydramatic shift between the decades and possibly embellishing it with a cigar lighter modeled into the image of a favorite saint—these open wide, if appalling, vistas to the religious gadgeteer. The absurdity of the electric vigil light stands leaves us almost, but not quite mute. We recognize their neatness and efficiency, but the religious symbolism escapes us completely. The sight of a bank of 10-watt bulbs piously emitting their ohms or amperes before some sacred shrine fails to kindle any spiritual flame in our hearts. The wedding of piety and jewelry which the religious gadgeteers are profitably fostering with St. Christopher money clips, St. Anthony key chains, miraculous medal bracelets, etc., may have something to recommend it, but we fail to see what it is. . . . If all the religious gadgets and novel devices that are marketed today were left off the market, we do not think piety would suffer one bit, though commerce might. If the same money were spent for prayer books, sturdy rosaries, and sound religious reading instead of gadgets, the interior religious gain would make up for the loss of outward signs of piety."—Which goes to show that even for a Roman Catholic too much is too much. But a Protestant fails to see why a rosary, however sturdy, should not be included among the gadgets.

Soviet Zone authorities have taken over control of Wartburg Castle near Eisenach, Luther's refuge after the Diet of Worms. The Soviet-German (Communist) News Agency A. D. N. said that the East German government had put the castle under its "guardianship" as a



"national cultural place." . . . Wartburg Castle is owned by the Wartburg Foundation, jointly sponsored by the City of Eisenach, the state of Thuringia, and the Evangelical Church of Thuringia. Evangelical Church officials in Berlin expressed the fear that the action signified expropriation of the Foundation by Soviet Zone authorities.

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The chairman of the Japan National Christian Council, the Rev. Michio Kozaki, accused Prime Minister Yoshida and other Japanese politicians of encouraging a revival of State Shintoism "to gain political support"; of "having no firm Shinto convictions," but showing a public interest in shrine worship "to take advantage of the trend toward the old State religion." The Japanese Premier, he alleged, had "sent a representative to the Ise (Sun Goddess) shrine to report to the ancestral war dead that the Peace Treaty had been signed." . . . Mr. Kozaki, who is spokesman for 90 per cent of Japan's Protestants and also moderator of the United Church of Christ in Japan, said that one of the greatest results of the last war "was the abolition of enforced State Shintoism." His fear of the revival of State Shintoism was shared by many Christian business men "who frequently are forced to donate to shrine funds under pressure of a boycott of their concerns. One Christian leader, when he refused to donate to his community shrine, was told that the police authority was behind the request." . . . He also said that the chairman of the Japan Buddhists Association was equally concerned over the rebirth of State Shintoism. The Buddhists are the largest religious group in Japan.

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The creation of a Department of Theology was approved by the Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Hannover. Aims of the department will be to promote co-operation in study among Lutherans, engage in theological studies, and assist the churches in strengthening congregational life. One of the department's chief tasks will be to co-ordinate exchanges of professors, students, pastors, and laymen between member churches of the Federation. Another function will be to facilitate the translation and publication of important theological and church literature.

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The organ of the Communist Free German Youth, the *Junge Welt*, has demanded a ban on the Junge Gemeinde (Evangelical Young Community) in the Soviet Zone, charging the Evangelical youth with being an "illegal and peace-disturbing organization which is working for

the American intelligence service." Besides, the Communist organ said, the Junge Gemeinde aims at undermining the Free German Youth as the only authorized youth organization in the Soviet Zone. Only the Free German Youth organization should be allowed to care for the recreation of East German youth. . . . Church sources in Berlin meanwhile reported that in several districts of the Soviet Zone recreational youth camps of the Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches were closed down by Communist authorities. — There is hardly an issue of the *R.N.S.* without some report of such anti-church action on the part of Soviet authorities; it is growing monotonous. But just because of this we are apt to overlook these reports: they are no longer news; so we skip over them with a hasty glance. And that would be tragic. Let us not forget that Communist forces everywhere are out to hinder all church influence on the growing youth.

THEO. HOYER