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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

The 93d General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern), meeting in Montreat, N. C., resolved after a long debate to liberalize the divorce and remarriage rules of the Church. A special committee's recommendation was adopted, that ministers be given more discretion in deciding where divorced persons may be remarried in the Church. The ministers' new discretionary powers would be based "not so much on what the applicant has done, as rather on what this person by God's grace has now become, and what by God's help he or she honestly intends and hopes to do in the future." In addition to adultery and willful desertion, which the Church at present recognizes, the new rules would include "gross and persistent unfaithfulness, physical or spiritual," as ground for divorce. To become effective, however, these changes in the rules must have the approval of three fourths of the Church's 84 presbyteries and a subsequent General Assembly.

* * *

Strong criticism of alleged Unitarian influence in State and local councils of churches, particularly in New England, was voiced at the 94th annual synod of the Augustana Lutheran Church in Chicago. The criticism came as the synod made clear in a resolution that its continued membership in the National Council of Churches was contingent upon the Council's adherence to the evangelical standards stated in the preamble of its constitution, which describes the National Council's purpose as "more fully to manifest oneness in Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Savior." Augustana Church pastors were instructed by the synod not to co-operate with any local or State councils of churches that have not subscribed to the National Council's constitution. Such co-operation was termed "compromising the doctrinal position of the Church."

* * *

From Rome it was announced that the Sacred Roman Rota, the Vatican tribunal, annulled 74 Roman Catholic marriages in 1952. One annulment was granted because a man did not fulfill his promise to allow his wife to practice her Catholic faith freely and educate their children as Catholics.

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Two Mennonite groups, the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren and the Evangelical Mennonite Church, united after a four-day meeting at

Grace Bible Institute in Omaha, Nebr. The new organization, the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites, will bring together some 5,000 members from 15 States and five Canadian provinces.

The 738th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Charta was observed at Old Christ Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pa., highlighted by a colorful display of baronial banners, among them the Banner of the Crusades and the Banner of Stephen Langton, who, as Archbishop of Canterbury, led in inducing King John to sign the famed document for human freedom in 1215.

The statue of Dr. Marcus Whitman, pioneer medical missionary, was placed in the United State Capitol, sponsored by the State of Washington. He is the second missionary to the Northwest to be thus honored. A few months ago Oregon put a statue of Rev. Jason Lee, Methodist missionary, into the Capitol. Dr. Whitman offered his services to the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions after receiving his medical degree, and in 1835 he was sent to the raw, undeveloped Oregon Territory. He led the first party to reach the Pacific Northwest by wagon train, reaching the site of the present city of Walla Walla, Wash., on May 1, 1836. With his wife and three other missionaries he went to work in the upper reaches of the Columbia to Christianize the Cayuse Indians. At this time the Hudson Bay Company was doing everything possible to claim this territory for Canada and Great Britain. Dr. Whitman and his mission encouraged American settlers and laid the foundation for claiming this area for the United States. In 1847, he, his wife, and twelve other missionaries were massacred by the Indians.

THEO. HOYER

THE CENTENNIAL CONVENTION OF THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD

The Centennial Convention of the Norwegian Synod, as reported in the *Lutheran Sentinel* (June 12, 1953), was highlighted by the "Centennial Sunday," May 31, 1953, on which three centennial services were held in the new Mankato High School Auditorium. In all of them the centennial motto: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8), was stressed. The opening service was held at 9:30 in the Norwegian language, with Rev. Christian Anderson of Mankato preaching on Eph. 1:3-9. An English festive service was held at 10:30, at which Rev. Erling Ylvisaker of Madison, Wis., preached on Is. 43:18-21. A special afternoon program included selections by the Bethany Choir, the Choral Union of the Synod, and a

children's chorus. There were about 100 voices in the children's chorus and 150 in the Choral Union. They were directed respectively by Prof. A. Fremder and Rev. G. Gullixon. Dr. N. A. Madson, dean of the seminary, delivered the afternoon address on Ps. 118:15. Rev. Juul Madson read a Centennial Ode, written by Dr. Madson and telling the story of the past hundred years of the Church. At the opening of the convention President Gullerud stressed the description of the last times of the world in Scripture as one which the Church must take most seriously. At the opening service of the convention Prof. G. O. Lillegard preached on Deut. 32:46, 47. Much emphasis was placed in the doctrinal discussions on the *Common Confession* and the attitude which the Norwegian Church has taken over against it. In the discussion of the mission work of the church Rev. Paul Anderson, a missionary in Nigeria, described the challenge and success of the work in West Africa. While the communicant membership of the Norwegian Church is only about 10,000, that of the Lutheran Church in Nigeria is about 26,000. Attention was also given to the mission work in Cornwall, England, where Rev. Joseph Petersen has secured a suitable building which is to be used both as a chapel and a residence of the missionary. On account of the mission work in foreign lands many favored a change of the name of the Church, but the matter is to be studied by the congregations and considered once more at the 1954 convention. At the close of 1953 the Norwegian paper *Luthersk Tidende* is to be discontinued, since there are now only 40 members that receive the *Tidende* alone, that is, without the English periodical, the *Lutheran Sentinel*. In 1951 there were conducted in the Synod 51 Norwegian and 3,465 English services. In 1928 there were 957 Norwegian and 1,300 English services. Three essays were read at the convention, all centering in Heb. 13:8. They were: "The Christ Our Fathers Worshiped," by Rev. Paul Ylvisaker; "The Christ We Worship," by Rev. A. M. Harstad; and "The Christ We Want Our Children to Worship," by Rev. M. Tweit. Of the 1952—53 budget only \$42,500 was collected. This fact prompted the convention to cut the budget of the coming year by ten per cent. For the special centennial campaign about \$68,000 was collected.

J. T. MUELLER

TWO ANNIVERSARIES

Under this heading, Ernest Gordon, in the *Sunday School Times*, reminds his readers of Johann Albrecht Bengel, who died on November 2, 1752, two hundred years ago last fall. It is well also for Lutherans to remember this great and good man, whose *Gnomon Novi*

Testamenti, published in 1742, is still read in wide areas. Despite the author's chiliastic vagaries he has helped hundreds of Bible students in gaining a deeper understanding of the Gospel of Christ. Of his *Gnomon* he said: "These exegetical annotations perform the office of an index. My intention is to point out, or indicate, the full force of words and sentences in the New Testament so that the reader, being introduced by the direct word into the text, may find as rich pasture there as possible." Keeping in mind the warning of the Savior that men shall give an account of every idle word spoken by them, he said: "It has long been my rule to write no word of which I might repent in my last hour." For this reason he made his notes in the *Gnomon* "concentrated theology in extremely concise form." Of the use of Scripture Bengel said: "The treatment of Scripture corresponds from time to time with the condition of the Church. When the Church is in good health, the light of Scripture shines bright. When the Church becomes ill, Scripture corrodes because it is neglected." Bengel's millennialistic speculations misled him to predict the second coming of Christ in 1837.

Dr. Gordon directs the attention of his readers also to the 500th anniversary of the birth of Jerome Savonarola, a Dominican monk, and above all an Italian reformer of considerable note, ranking with Wycliffe and Hus. Savonarola was born in 1452 and suffered martyrdom in 1498. He had attained to a purer knowledge of the saving truth through diligent study of St. Augustine and the Scriptures, and in the course of time became an eloquent and passionate preacher of repentance in Florence, Italy. Though he rebuked the sins of the rulers of his time, both in Church and State, and admonished the people to purity of living, he held that men could not be saved by their works but by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Good works could be expected only where the heart had been regenerated by faith. To silence him the Pope offered him the cardinal's hat, but Savonarola preferred the red hat of martyrdom. Dr. Gordon adds that the 500th anniversary of this great man was marked by the publication, by a Swiss Catholic publication house, of a biography of the martyr worthy of his testimony. He quotes from it the following: "For the truth's sake Savonarola rose up against the errors of his time and gave an incomparable example of fruitful love. He stood out in history as a guidepost on the way of the Cross." He was hanged and burned at the stake as a demagog and heretic on May 23, 1498, and he died in pious submission to God and cheerful trust in Him who died for him. His chief work, *Triumph of*

the Cross (Trionfo della Croce), is an able apologetic of Christianity. Luther republished an exposition of Psalm 51, written by Savonarola in prison, as an example of evangelical doctrine and Christian piety.

J. T. MUELLER

THE TARRINGTON CONVENTION, MARCH 12—18, 1953

Under this heading the *Australian Lutheran* (April 8, 1953) reports at some length on the 17th triennial convention of the Ev.-Luth. Church of Australia. There were in attendance 136 delegates, 90 pastors, and 100 visitors from Australia, New Guinea, and New Zealand. These, with many local members attending the opening service, made up the large congregation of 800 that listened to the inaugural address on Rev. 1:4-8 by Pastor W. Paech, General Vice-President. On Convention Sunday two services were held, and these were attended by 2,000. The theme of the convention was "The Coming Christ, the Hope of the Church." Prof. F. J. H. Blaess read the essay on "The Lutheran Church: Its Character, Teaching, and Task." In his report President Hoopmann stated that the Church now numbers 37,491 souls, 133 pastors, and 27 teachers. He reported also that "with the help of God much appreciable headway has been made" in the important matter of Lutheran unity in Australia. Later the convention declared itself in favor of a complete God-pleasing amalgamation of the two Lutheran Churches in Australia, encouraged the intersynodical committees to continue with negotiations to achieve with God's gracious help complete unity in spirit, doctrine, faith, and practice; and authorized the calling of a special synod when complete unity has been established not only in doctrine, but also in the practical matters that are still under discussion. The Rev. Dr. J. Stolz, president of the United Ev.-Luth. Church of Australia, attended the sessions and expressed his joy at the progress made in doctrinal matters. In his address he said (quoted in part): "Miracles still happen; we live in an age of miracles, and we can be sure that God will solve future practical difficulties. The union of the two churches will not be death, but new life. God is rich, yet He uses us. God is almighty, yet He uses us. May the day of union not be far distant." The convention recognized it as an urgent need to have a full-time president and resolved to make the office of the presidency a full-time office. Favorable reports were heard on the progress of the mission work in New Guinea. A new mission station was established at Menyamy in the Kuka-kuku district. The old Siassi Mission on the Rooke-Siassi Islands is making steady progress. Since 1945 a total of 2,624 baptisms took place. In place of the late Dr. J. Darsow, Pastor M. H. Winkler was appointed as the

new Lutheran Hour director. The attendance at Concordia College in Unley during the past three years was gratifying, the attendance amounting to 158, 190, and 187 in 1950, 1951, and 1952. A little more than one third of the students were girls. Thirty-one pastors, teachers, and deaconesses were graduated during the past three years; confirmees averaged 35 annually. Special attention was given to German in accord with the purpose for which C. C. was founded. Since Prof. A. Riep of Edmonton, Canada, had declined the call to be principal, Professor Blaess was called in his place. Much attention was given to the work among the migrants that came to Australia to extend to these refugees due hospitality and to do all things possible to win them for Christ. The convention resolved that efforts should be made to have a "church paper in every home." The editorial department of especially the *Australian Lutheran* has suffered a great loss in the death of Dr. J. Darsow, the synodical editor. The L. L. L. of Australia was greatly encouraged to continue its work of providing working capital, especially Church Extension moneys. The budget of the general synod for 1953 was fixed at £21,801, or roughly speaking, \$65,000. The election results were as follows: President, Dr. C. E. Hoopmann; Vice-President, Rev. W. H. Paech; Secretary, Rev. C. E. Zweck; Treasurer, Mr. B. R. Temme. The report closes with the words: "The convention arrangements were well planned and run; the hospitality warm and generous; the press publicity lavish; the convention was very grateful to the congregations of the Western District of Victoria."

The April 22, 1953, issue of the *Australian Lutheran* reports that the church reaffirmed its attitude toward the LWF "as one of cooperation without affiliation, wherever such cooperation is possible without violation of any Biblical principle." In his reply to Dr. Lundquist's invitation to the Church to become a member, Dr. Clarence E. Hoopman wrote the following (quoted in part): "Whilst thanking you for your courteous invitation and while expressing appreciation of the fine work done by your Federation, especially with regard to World Relief, we cannot see our way clear to join the Federation as long as we are not convinced that it accepts all the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, not only *de iure*, but also *de facto*; but we welcome the opportunity to cooperate with the Federation in all matters in keeping with our principles and in harmony with the action of the committee appointed at the Uelzen Conference." The same issue of the *Australian Lutheran* quotes a part of Professor Franzmann's *Lutheran Witness* report on the Uelzen meeting, in which occur the words: "It was a gather-

ing of serious and conscientious Lutheran churchmen earnestly seeking in the fear of God to find the way to be true both to their obligation as a part of world Lutheranism and to the Lutheran Confessions to which they have been solemnly pledged."

J. T. MUELLER

EXISTENTIALISM AND THE CHURCH IN EUROPE

Without closer scrutiny the shifting interests of European theology might look to an outsider like the bending to and fro of the proverbial reed in the wind. On further investigation, however, it is not that at all, or only to a small degree. European theological fashions are usually born of a great need or crisis in the life of the Continent.

At the moment, existentialism is quite the rage in the Church of Europe. The writings of Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger enjoy great popularity. In fact, the latter is often referred to as one of the major prophets of Western civilization.

This consuming interest in existentialism can be accounted for in several ways. In the first instance, the modern technological revolution with its development of techniques in mass production shows a strong tendency to de-personalize life. Secondly, the philosophy of the rationalists overreached itself in its insistence that the universe and human life had a significance which could be ascertained by processes of logical thought. The idealists, too, claimed that man's environment had a story to tell—a tale which in reality turned out to be an illusion. Then, in the third place, two major catastrophes, in the form of world wars, underlined the fact that the problems of men and of society run deeper than either the philosopher or the average theologian of the nineteenth century had supposed.

As a consequence there is at the moment a vital interest in the existentialist point of view. Now, there are several kinds of existentialism, ranging all the way from the atheism of Sartre to the rigidly ecclesiastical version of Maritain. All of them may best be described as attempts to view life, both philosophically and theologically, in terms of human suffering. Existentialism is a scheme of salvation intended not only to account for the unsatisfactoriness of human life, in terms of estrangement and forlornness, but to show the way out of tragedy, despair, and anguish to a new freedom.

Existentialism is a pronounced return to the personal life of the thinker. It stresses man's distinctive nature as a person. At the same time it denies that man's reason can find a meaning in life. The fountainhead of this conviction was really the Danish philosopher-theologian Søren Kierkegaard. Living at the time of Hegel, he took

issue with the basic principles assumed by philosophy. Philosophers were sure that man's rational nature was sufficient to disclose meaning. That Kierkegaard vehemently denied. What he wrote in his day became the living experience of twentieth-century Europe, when a continent collapsed under the weight of two major wars and the political and social divisions following in their wake.

But men cannot live without meaning. The result is despair. This is really where the existentialist begins his quest for truth. The individual must go through the trial of suffering to find his own salvation. He tries to find a source of certainty in a world from which he is estranged. The symbolic figure of existentialist literature is that of the stranger, the displaced person, the "man in the barracks." He is an individual who once had a family, who once owned property, who was once respected, but who has lost everything in the upheavals of recent decades. He has nothing any more. He is without a job and without responsibilities. He has no appointments to keep and no place to go.

For this person life seems to have no meaning. The things around him that intrude upon his consciousness have no tale to tell. The individual is alone. He has his encounter with Nothing. He stands at the brink of an abyss. He experiences dread or anguish; and his crisis is at hand.

At this point secular existentialism and that of the Church part company. In secular existentialism the individual goes hurtling down into the abyss of Nothing. This is his road to freedom; for in the vortex of despair he will somehow find a new certainty. He has drunk life to its dregs. Through suffering he finds freedom. Life has done its worst to him; but he is still alive to start over. He can now make himself anew by an act of resolute will. He becomes a Prometheus unbound, able to defy the Fates.

Existentialism in the Church takes a different course. It finds in the despair of the individual a point of contact for the Word of grace. It points to Luther's words: "It is God's nature to make something out of nothing. Hence he who has not yet become nothing, out of him God will not yet make anything." At the abyss, therefore, the individual is directed by existentialist theology to the hands of grace which can carry him safely across to the firm ground of faith. Out of despair, then, comes the triumph, not of the will, but of faith. Out of man's Nothing comes God's Everything. The Church of Europe has learned to speak of Gethsemane and Golgotha with a clear accent owing to her interest in existentialism.

MARTIN H. SCHARLEMANN

A NOTE ON JOHN 4:4 AND 4:35

In a book entitled *The Joy of Study*, consisting of papers on New Testament and related subjects presented to honor Dr. Frederick Clifton Grant on his sixtieth birthday (published by the Macmillan Company, New York, 1951), a brief essay is submitted by Sydney Temple of the University of Massachusetts on the topic "Geography and Climate in the Fourth Gospel." The author shows that, whatever geographical or climatic hints the Fourth Gospel contains, all agree with the view that the writer of this Gospel was a native of Palestine. Many of us will find of special interest the content of two paragraphs. The first one deals with John 4:4: "He (that is, Jesus) had to pass through Samaria." Reference is here made to the trip of Jesus from Judea to Galilee. Why did He *have* to pass through Samaria? There was a direct road leading from Judea to Galilee in the gorge of the Jordan, which did not touch Samaria. (Besides, there was available a circuitous route through the Transjordan territory; the latter route, we may conclude, was too time-consuming under the circumstances and was not considered.) Dr. Temple says it must have been the time of year which made the choice of the route through Samaria imperative. A journey in the Jordan Valley is delightful in winter time, but is a terrific affliction if undertaken in midsummer. The whole Jordan Valley from the Sea of Galilee to Jericho, it will be remembered, is far below sea level, and in summer the heat there is blistering. We assume, then, that this ever memorable journey of Jesus through Samaria occurred not in wintertime, as many scholars suppose, but in summer. Jesus had spent the Passover in Jerusalem, as John 2:15ff. relates. The Passover falls at the end of March or beginning of April. Our Lord afterwards spent some time in Jerusalem and vicinity, in which period the events related in John 3 occurred. Then came His return to Galilee, and the note John 4:4 makes it possible for us to see that the journey was made in summer. The paucity of incidents reported for this period makes us think that His sojourn in Judea at this time was very brief.

All of this has some bearing on the point which forms the burden of the second paragraph under consideration. It deals with John 4:35: "Do you not see it is still four months and then the harvest comes?" This word of Jesus has been thought to be definite proof that He was at Jacob's Well in winter, in December or January, four months before the wheat harvest, the first sheaves of which were presented at the time of the Passover. But the above argumentation has shown that Jesus in all likelihood did not speak these words in winter, but in summer.

If that has to be granted, then our Lord is not referring to a harvest of wheat or other small grain, but the statement is a proverbial saying which might be paraphrased: "From sowing to reaping ordinarily takes four months." On account of John 4:4 this latter interpretation may be considered the right one.

Dr. Temple, it should be added, thinks that the harvest which Jesus has in mind is the grape harvest followed by the Feast of Tabernacles, which was observed in fall. That idea fits the interpretation of John 4:4 submitted above, but does not accord well with the words of Jesus that the "fields are white" for the harvest, v. 35. Even though the latter words are figurative, the basis of the imagery employed is not the grape, but the wheat harvest.

It is only fair to say that there are arguments on the other side. On this point Fahling's excellent *Life of Christ*, p. 184f., may be consulted. On the whole the view submitted by Dr. Temple seems preferable.

W. F. ARNDT

THE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY IN JAPAN

The *Lutheran* (May 13, 1953) supplies some interesting news items on the new Christian university in Japan. As one ponders the information, one wonders how this united missions project is able to escape unionism and liberalism. The writer says: "The largest postwar project of American Protestant missions in Japan has been the establishment of a Christian university near Tokyo. Japanese themselves raised the money to buy the 365-acre campus. Americans of 14 denominations collected funds to purchase the first building and equipment. Last month the university had its opening day, enrolling 199 young men and women in its first class. By 1957 there should be 550 undergraduate and 300 graduate students, it is estimated. 'How happy all true friends of the university are that a new milestone is about to be passed,' was the message from ULC President Franklin Clark Fry on the opening day. 'Here is my hand in lasting friendship to you and the International Christian University.' Dr. Fry had been the speaker on the dedication day of the new institution a year ago. Graduates trained under Christian influence to become leaders in the Japan of the future are expected from the new school. Teachers will be gathered from a variety of nations. At the beginning there are 22 Japanese, 12 Americans, two Canadians, one Swiss (Dr. Emil Brunner)."

J. T. MUELLER