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## Theological Observer. – Kirchlich Zeitgeschichtliches

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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

### AN ANNIVERSARY YEAR FOR THIS JOURNAL

With the January issue, the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY entered upon its twenty-fifth year of service to our pastors, the first issue having appeared in January, 1930. In that first issue of this journal, the editors wrote:

The *Concordia Theological Monthly* is, in a manner of speaking, a new periodical. It has a new name, selected from a long list of names submitted for consideration, a new cover, a new arrangement of contents; and it is, quite frankly, a bilingual magazine. But it intends, under the gracious guidance of God and assisted by the prayerful help of the brethren whom it chiefly intends to serve, to continue the policies of the former tried and proved periodicals. Its name — *Concordia Theological Monthly* — not only identifies it with the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod, but proclaims that it intends to adhere with full allegiance to all the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as collected in the Book of Concord of 1580. What *Lehre und Wehre* taught and defended for seventy-five years, what the *Magazin fuer Ev. Luth. Homiletik* presented for more than fifty years, what the *Theological Quarterly* and the *Theological Monthly* have proclaimed since 1897, that the new *Concordia Theological Monthly* intends to be identified with, to teach, and to proclaim as long as it exists. And in this new undertaking, as in all other projects launched for the benefit of God's Kingdom, our motive and object shall be SOLI DEO GLORIA!

In the foreword of that same issue, Dr. Fr. Pieper expressed his views regarding "ecumenical Lutheranism." In the course of that article he wrote:

Ecumenical Lutheranism regards Holy Scripture as God's own, infallible, majestic Word to which the Church to the Day of Judgment may not add anything and from which it may not detract anything. Even as the Lutheran Church of the sixteenth and seventeenth century was bound by the Word, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," so also the Church of the twentieth century is bound by that selfsame Word until the end of time (p. 3).

1954 will be a year of momentous decisions for Lutheran bodies in our country and perhaps elsewhere. "Ecumenical Lutheranism" is as burning an issue in our day as it was twenty-five years ago. "Ecumenical Christianity" is an even greater issue. It will be the responsibility of the editors of this journal honestly to face these issues, supremely conscious of St. Peter's injunction, "If any man speak, let

him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). In dedicating themselves to this task, the present editors of the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY beseech the prayerful support of the readers of this journal.

P. M. B.

#### FULGENS CORONA

In commemoration of the centennial of the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, December 8, 1854, which established the Roman dogma of Mary's immaculate conception, Pope Pius XII has proclaimed 1954 as the Marian Year, and published the encyclical *Fulgens Corona*, the Radiant Crown. The encyclical reads as follows:

"The radiant crown of glory, with which the most pure brow of the Virgin Mother was encircled by God, seems to Us to shine more brilliantly, as We recall to mind the day on which, one hundred years ago, Our Predecessor of happy memory Pius IX, surrounded by a vast retinue of Cardinals and Bishops, with infallible apostolic authority defined, pronounced and solemnly sanctioned 'that the doctrine which holds that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary at the first moment of her conception was, by singular grace and privilege of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved from all stain of original sin is revealed by God, and therefore to be firmly and resolutely believed by all the faithful.'

"Celebrate the Marian Year which We proclaim to be held the whole world over from the month of December next until the same month of the coming year—just a century having elapsed since the Virgin Mother of God, amid the applause of the entire Christian people, shone with a new gem, when, as We have said, Our predecessor of immortal memory solemnly decreed and defined that she was absolutely free from all stain of original sin.

"We firmly trust that during the celebration of this Marian Year fervent prayers be offered throughout the world to the most powerful Mother of God, who is also our tender mother; and that in those prayers special requests be made of her efficacious and ever-present patronage that the sacred rights which are proper to the Church [i. e., the Roman Church] and which the very exercise of human and civil liberty demands, may be openly and sincerely recognized by all.

"Since, however, solid sincere and tranquil peace has not yet appeared in souls and among peoples, let all strive with pious prayer to fully and fruitfully obtain and consolidate it, so that, just as the Most Blessed Virgin brought forth the Prince of Peace, so also may she, by her protection and patronage, unite men in friendly agreement."

F. E. M.

## THE NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD UPHELD

Under this heading the *Australasian Theological Review* (March to June, 1953) comments editorially on a recent defense of the *theologia naturalis* by Dr. Helmut Echternach. Dr. H. Hamann, the author of the editorial, writes:

"More than once in the course of the last few years we have found it necessary to warn against theological opinions which, probably emanating from the teachings of Karl Barth, have tried to weaken the concept of *theologia naturalis* or to banish it from Lutheran theology altogether, representing it as an element of Scholasticism and Aristotelianism uncritically taken over by the older Lutheran dogmaticians. We have pointed out that occasional overstatements on the part of some dogmaticians should not be permitted to offset what is undoubtedly Scripture doctrine, and we have been distressed when meeting, in a milieu commonly regarded as reflecting orthodox and conservative Lutheranism, a tendency to explain away, in the interest of a theologically indefensible thesis, Scripture texts which simply refuse to be neutralized or minimized. It is the more interesting and important to find a scholar rising to the defense of the cavalierly-treated *theologia naturalis* in the *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*. He is Dr. Helmut Echternach, pastor of Hamburg and lecturer on Systematic Theology in the *Kirchliche Hochschule* (university) of that city. An essay from his pen entitled 'Theology and Ontology' runs through several issues of the journal named. We quote from the issue of October 15, 1952 (p. 154).

"In my judgment the clarification of this question (*i. e.*, of the *theologia naturalis*) is of decisive importance for preserving the specifically Lutheran doctrine of faith. The content of the Christian faith is not the existence of God, but the grace of God! Only when the existence of God is acknowledged *before* (italics in text) faith, when God is recognized as the Giver of the Law and feared as the Judge, does trust (*fiducia*) in His grace become possible. Consequently the traditional proofs of the existence of God, in particular, the moral proof, so often adduced by Luther, are not without theological value. They form an integral part in the knowledge of God under the Law, which renders the message of the Gospel audible. The denial of every form of *theologia naturalis*, which is current today also in Lutheran theology, means in fact that the Law is no more taken seriously, and that therefore faith is no longer understood as the blessed assurance of salvation. In that case faith includes the existence and the judgment of God and appears as a fabric of theses which *must* (italics in text)

be believed. If the true relationship (*Korrelation*) between Law and Gospel is destroyed, the Gospel itself has become Law.

"Hence in the background of the thesis widely accepted by the adherents of Dialectic Theology, viz., that the existence and the essence (*Dasein und Sosein*) of God dare not be separated, there stands revealed the typically Calvinistic confusion of Law and Gospel—according to Luther the most diabolical of all temptations (*Anfechtungen*). . . . For if the Christian message is no longer conceived as the (divine) reply to the desperate need caused by sin and the Law, it will appear first as a legal dogma and eventually as a thesis of an undemonstrable and improbable metaphysic. The Church would then be in the peculiar position of offering to the world a message of salvation for which there exists no desire whatever. It can emerge from this incongruous situation only by recalling its real commission, by insisting that its true message is not to proclaim the existence of God—which, indeed, can be *proved* (italics in text) by philosophy and the history of religion and of the world with a probability of at least 99.9%—but the essential quality (*das Sosein*) of God: His judgment and His grace, Law and Gospel.'

"From this quotation it may appear as though Dr. Echternach considered the natural knowledge of God and His Law as sufficient to arouse in man the *terrores conscientiae*, the consciousness of guilt and dread of the righteous judgment of God, without further witness of the Law from the revealed Word of God. However, this is hardly the author's meaning, since he plainly includes the preaching of the Law in the proper and necessary proclamation of the Church. What really concerns us here is the vindication of the natural knowledge of God and of the common proofs for the existence of God by a writer who rests his case on altogether different suppositions than uncritical dependence upon the old Lutheran dogmaticians. Perhaps this marks the beginning of the backward swing of the pendulum, toward a more just and adequate appraisal of the questions under consideration, as far as modern theological thinkers and writers are concerned. To which might be added a moral: Blessed is the theologian who, unperturbed by the winds or currents of theological and philosophical thoughts of the hour, adheres to the teaching of the abiding Word; for he will be spared the humiliating necessity of constant revision and adjustment."

J. T. MUELLER

#### MARIOLOGY AND MARIOLATRY

"Born of the Virgin Mary. Such is the Creed's simple affirmation of the temporal origin of the humanity of Christ, whose Divine Nature

as the Son of the living God is eternal." So writes the Most Reverend Fulton J. Sheen, D.D., in his introduction to William Hermanns' *Mary and the Mocker* (Our Sunday Visitor Press, Huntington, Ind.). No Protestant will demur at this confession of faith. But when the distinguished author and radio speaker continues: "But if Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body, is born of Mary, it is true in a lesser degree that every true Christian who is a member of the Body is also born of her," the theologically informed Protestant raises his eyebrows in protest. And when he reads Rev. Sheen's final statement in that introduction: "Our Lord said that unless we are reborn, we cannot live in His Kingdom. But can a man be reborn without a woman?" he gasps for breath and explodes as did the Athenians: "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears" (Acts 17:19,20).

The fact of the matter is that Rev. Sheen is merely voicing sentiments regarding Mary and her place in the divine scheme of salvation which are widely current in Roman Catholic literature and which seem pale and colorless when compared with the extravagant apostrophe to Mary uttered by Pope Pius XII last December in his proclamation of the Marian Year. In that prayer the Pontiff said:

Enraptured by the splendor of your heavenly beauty, and impelled by the anxieties of the world, we cast ourselves into your arms, O Immaculate Mother of Jesus. . . . Bend tenderly over our aching wounds. Convert the wicked, dry the tears of the afflicted and oppressed, comfort the poor and humble, quench hatreds, sweeten harshness, safeguard the flower of purity in youth, protect the Holy Church, make all men feel the attraction of Christian goodness!

Mariolatry has been traced back to the fourth century. There have been periods in the history of the Church when it flowered into full bloom. In the past century it appears to have become the safe haven of Roman Catholic apologists to which they flee for refuge from the onrushing tides of modern secularism. The difference in approach to the veneration of Mary between the present half-century and the preceding one, is pointed out by Drs. Gibb and Nitzschke in an article published by the *Evangelischer Bund-Konfessionskundliches Institut* (May-August, 1953). In this article, the authors, who have examined and annotated a substantial body of materials dealing with Mariology, make the significant comment:

It appears to be a Mariological axiom to attribute everything to Mary that might in any way elevate, honor, and praise her. Already fifty years ago, Roman Catholics affirmed all honors accorded Mary in our day. But at that time writers were still, by and large, critical

and consulted Scripture and tradition for shreds of evidence. In our day, this approach has practically disappeared.

In passing, it might be noted that, according to the authors quoted, the standard German work on Mariology and the one most often quoted in Roman Catholic sources is Paul Straeter's three-volume *Marienkunde* (1947, Ferd. Schoeningh, Paderborn). The titles of the several volumes of this comprehensive work read: *Maria in der Offenbarung*, Vol. 1 (384 pages); *Maria in der Glaubenswissenschaft*, Vol. 2 (360 pages); *Maria im Christentum*, Vol. 3 (390 pages).

In this Marian Year in which the Roman Catholic Church is commemorating the 100th anniversary of the promulgation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin (December 8, 1854), the "Queen of Heaven" will be accorded honors due only Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In view of this tragic development in the Christian Church, Protestants may well take to heart the observation made by the *Church of England Newspaper* (*Time*, December 28):

This prayer [the reference is to the prayer composed by Pius XII for the opening of the Marian Year and quoted in part above] transplants faith from Christ to the Virgin Mary. . . . And what, we may legitimately ask, is left for the Holy Spirit? The Virgin Mary, apparently, displaces the Third Person of the Trinity as well as the Second. . . . Such devotion is what might be expected of a church under the domination of a celibate hierarchy. The normal development of their personality through family life is forbidden them; they must perforce find a substitute to occupy the place a wife should have in their imagination.

Lutherans will, in addition, bear in mind the strictures Martin Luther voiced in his *De servo arbitrio* and in his *Lobgesang der heiligen Jungfrau Maria, genannt das Magnificat*. The passages read:

A teaching nowhere taught in Scripture, and not proved outside Scripture in any form of evidence, is not a part of the Christian faith, but rather belongs into the category of Lucian's fables. [Lucian was a Greek satirical author who lived in the second century of our era.] It must be remembered, however, that Lucian writes and enjoys good-humored banter. But the people with whom we are dealing act indiscreetly in a very serious matter, which, besides, has to do with eternal salvation, and they do so to the detriment of countless souls (WA 18, 661).

The Virgin Mary does not like to hear those vain babblers who preach and write much regarding her merit merely in order to demonstrate their own great ability. They fail to see how they blunt the *Magnificat*, accuse the mother of God of lies, and minimize the grace of God. For the more merit one ascribes to her, the more one

reduces divine grace and diminishes the truth of the *Magnificat*. The angel, moreover, greets Mary only with "Thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee" and that she is blessed among all women only for these reasons. Therefore all those who heap so much praise and honor on her are in great danger of making an idol out of her, just as though she were concerned that one should honor *her* and look to *her* for benefits, whereas she spurns all this and wants God to be praised in her (WA 7, 568).

P. M. B.

#### RECENT ROMAN CATHOLIC LITERATURE ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

In *Die Theologische Literaturzeitung* (June, 1953), Prof. Leonhard Fendt of Augsburg presents an overview of recent contributions made by Roman Catholic scholars to New Testament interpretation. We reproduce the principal thoughts of the long and interesting article.

The greatest work of the Roman Catholics in the field of New Testament exposition parallels, according to the author, the popular *Das Neue Testament Deutsch*, extensively used in Evangelical areas. The Catholic work bears the title *Das Regensburger Neue Testament*, so called because it appeared in the Verlag Friedrich Pustet in Regensburg. So far nine volumes have appeared, and the tenth, an index volume, will be published soon. Already some volumes are appearing in a second edition, an indication that the work satisfies a definite demand. It is read mainly by the clergy and such laymen as are interested in the Bible, which, as the writer says, is true also of *Das Neue Testament Deutsch*. Both commentaries are intended not so much for persons who are to be won for Bible study, but rather for those who already read the Bible. The main problem (Professor Fendt thinks) facing those who read these commentaries is how to make those "Biblical" (devoted to Scripture) who use them.

Professor Fendt next discusses the commentaries on Matthew and Luke by Joseph Schmid, pointing out the serious problems with which Catholic scholars must wrestle who are bound to the official interpretation of the Church. Very interesting is the question, propounded by Schmid, whether the promise in Matt. 16:18f. concerned only Peter or whether it extended also to his successors. Schmid thinks that the words of the text say nothing of the latter, but that the doctrine of the primacy of the Pope, while not expressed directly in the text, rests upon the inference of the sense (*in der Konsequenz des Sinnes*).

Dr. Fendt finds much to praise in Wikenhauser's *Commentary on Revelation*, which he regards as equaling those of Behm and Johannes Weiss. Wikenhauser defends the eschatological (*endgeschichtliche*)



interpretation of the Apocalypse, but so that this must be joined with contemporary history (*zeitgeschichtliche Deutung*). He interprets the prophecy concerning a millennium (ch. 20) figuratively.

J. T. MUELLER

#### THE MODE OF BAPTISM

In the *Lutheran Outlook* (October, 1953) Rev. N. J. Holm discusses the insistence of Baptists on immersion as the only right way of administering the Sacrament. He shows both from history and the Bible that "to baptize" does not necessarily mean "to immerse." For this statement he quotes the historical fact that at Syracuse, Sicily, there is a baptismal font from about A. D. 200, about 12 inches deep and able to hold only 3 gallons of water, which bears the following inscription in Greek: "Zosimus consecrated and dedicated to God this holy vessel for the use of Holy Baptism." The writer remarks: "Here at least Christians were not immersed." A painting from A. D. 107 in one of the Roman catacombs represents the Baptism of Christ by John, who pours water on His head. The writer quotes Dr. Withron, who says: "The testimonies of the catacombs in respect to the mode of Baptism, as far as they go, are strong in favor of sprinkling or pouring" (quoted from "The Catacombs of Rome").

From the article we select two more points. Pastor Holm writes: "The Baptists tell us that the Ethiopian eunuch was immersed, because it says in Acts 8:38: 'And they both went down into the water,' and in verse 39: 'And when they came up out of the water.' . . . Eusebius, Jerome, and authorities on the time of the Apostles inform us that there was not enough water there to immerse the eunuch in."

The traditional place where Philip baptized the eunuch is still being pointed out to tourists on their way from Bethlehem to Hebron. When in 1952 the undersigned visited the place, there was not enough water in the pool for the Arab women assembled there to wash their clothes. Baptists exclaimed in surprise: "This is the last time I will quote this passage for immersion."

A second point which Pastor Holm makes in his article is that Baptists quote Luther as preferring immersion, for he is supposed to have said: "Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God with immersion." But what Luther really said is this: "Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in water" (*Die Taufe ist nichts anders denn Gottes Wort im Wasser*).

J. T. MUELLER

#### THE CONFSSIONAL CHARACTER OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

In May, 1937, the "Confessing Church of Germany" (*die Bekennende Kirche*) agreed on a number of theses, the scope of which was that altar

fellowship between Lutherans, on the one hand, and the Reformed and "United" (*Unierte*), on the other, is not contrary to the Scriptural administration of the Lord's Supper. Since the resolutions were adopted in the city of Halle, they are known as the "Halle Resolutions" (*die Hallenser Beschlüsse*). In the *Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung* (August 15, 1953) the Rev. Dr. Matthias Schulz, a leading divine of the Breslau Synod, points out that the Halle Resolutions are untenable. Three parts of the thorough and lengthy discussion are devoted to historical and doctrinal considerations, while the fourth sums up the results of the investigation. Dr. Schulz shows that it is the sacred obligation of the Church not to treat the manner of the Lord's self-communication in the Holy Supper as an open question, but to confess it in such a way as the Lord Himself has declared it. For this reason the Lord's Supper in the Lutheran Church has always been a confessional act of primary importance. Lutherans therefore have always refused altar fellowship with the Reformed. Also with respect to this doctrine human reason must not be regarded as a *principium cognoscendi*, but Christ's words [of institution] must be obeyed with childlike faith. Christians who surrender the clear words of Christ and so forsake the foundation of Scripture will finally lose themselves in generalities and abstractions by which nothing is decided and nothing is gained. Confession of the pure doctrine of Scripture also includes the rejection of the contrary doctrine, and this implies denial of altar fellowship to those who teach and tolerate false doctrine.

In conclusion Dr. Schulz states that no proof can be advanced that the confessional antitheses between Lutherans and Calvinists have been overcome. Nor can 1 Cor. 10:16, 17 be so interpreted as to show that there may be altar fellowship between the two groups that hold contrary doctrines. For this reason confessing Lutheran groups cannot accept the Halle Resolutions.

One admires the frank and emphatic, yet friendly and objective way in which Dr. Schulz declares his conviction. The fact that the editor of the *Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung* has published Dr. Schulz's article proves that Lutherans in the VELKD are willing to listen to and consider the views of the spokesmen of the Lutheran Free churches.

J. T. MUELLER

#### JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

According to Rev. Horton Davies (*Theology*, September), Jehovah's Witnesses are expecting the second advent and millennium to arrive sometime before 1984. Then God's "Great Theocracy" will

be established on earth, and Jehovah's Witnesses will be the only survivors to share in the divine kingdom.

Quoting "Judge" Rutherford, one of the most ardent devotees of the movement (died in 1942), Jehovah's Witnesses have already decided how the problem of feeding the resurrected bodies may be solved. The passage from Rutherford's *Riches* (p.188) reads:

Remembering the Lord's promise that in the millennial period "the earth shall yield her increase" and that the desert and the wilderness-places of the earth shall become as a Garden of Eden, we may safely estimate upon all the land, which we may find, according to recent estimates, to be 57,000,000 square miles or over 36,000,000,000 acres. What would this mean as to space for each individual who has ever lived in the world, i. e., 28,441,126,838 persons? It means that there would be 1,275 acres for each little village of 200 families. Quite a sufficiency of room, all will agree, under the new conditions promised. But if more space be necessary, with faith we will readily see that it will be quite within the divine power to raise vast continents from the depths of the ocean, or indeed to give a literal as well as symbolical fulfillment to the declaration—There shall be no more sea.

Perhaps the most fitting retort to such wild speculations, as Rev. Davies reminds his readers, is that of Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr that faith has nothing to do with either the furniture of heaven or the temperature of hell.

Jehovah's Witnesses are not only schismatics, they are also heretics. Rev. Davies summarizes their chief false teachings in the following words:

1. Their doctrine is largely based upon the obscurities of such apocalyptic books as Daniel and Revelation, implying that the revelation of God is a tangled skein only to be unravelled by the subtle minds of this sect. But Christianity is not a mystery religion for initiates, for "we have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," who declared, "I am the Light of the World."
2. Their doctrine is based upon an arbitrary selection of texts from the Scriptures, but the main body of the teaching of Jesus and His apostles is either evaded or perverted; and to each ounce of the Bible a hundredweight of speculation is added.
3. To use the Bible as an *Old Moore's Almanac* of prediction is to misunderstand its purpose and to claim to know more than our Lord Himself, who confessed that He did not know the time of the coming of the Son of Man again on the clouds.
4. Their creed must be rejected because it offers salvation on too easy terms, affirming, in effect, that payment for it may be deferred

to another existence. This is to repudiate the solemn and urgent Either—Or of the Bible and to sentimentalize the conception of a holy God. Moreover, this is a salvation by good works, not by faith in the victory of Christ.

Jehovah's Witnesses are on the march. They gave evidence of it at their recent convention in New York. They are on the march in Europe. They are on the march in other parts of the world. That march can be halted only by the proclamation of the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ and by the persistent efforts of the Church to teach its members all that the Lord of the Church commanded. P. M. B.

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

*Chicago.*—Lutheran welfare leaders adopted recommendations for more effective church social work at the close of a two-day conference here.

The meeting, sponsored by the Division of Welfare of the National Lutheran Council, was attended by 50 delegates representing finance departments, welfare boards, and institutions of the eight Lutheran bodies affiliated with the Council. They agreed:

Chaplaincy services are a vital part of the spiritual-social mission of the Church and should be integral parts of the program of Lutheran welfare agencies and institutions.

Services to unmarried parents should receive emphasis in the Lutheran welfare agency program. But Lutheran welfare agencies should not operate primarily as placement centers for the children of unwed parents. Chaplain, parish pastor, and case worker should function as a team in group service to the unmarried father and mother.

Social agencies should not only maintain homes for the aged but also emphasize services in rehabilitation, recreation, and occupation for older persons.

Community resources and trained leaders should be used to bring spiritual and social service to alcoholics.

Churches should make greater efforts in helping immigrants come to the United States, integrating them into American life and welcoming them to church membership.

Lutherans' consciences should be "quicken" to community, State, national, and international injustices and conditions that are contrary to God's will.

"Lutheran welfare councils should study social issues and legislation and give constructive counsel to public officials and legislative bodies," the delegates recommended.

They also proposed that Lutherans establish a social and spiritual ministry for seamen on an international basis.

Dr. Clarence E. Krumbholz of New York, executive secretary of the Council's welfare division, said:

"Lutheran agencies are beginning to evaluate themselves, hoping to reframe programs to meet today's higher social standards. We recognize that we must meet modern, changing situations.

"Our chief aim is to increase the effectiveness of Lutheran welfare services as an integral part of the Church's mission."

The conference was the third and last in a series of Lutheran welfare meetings held here. The 1951 conference discussed programming and financing, the 1952 sessions financing, and this year's meeting programming.

*Melbourne, Australia.*—Formation of a laymen's movement within the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia was decided upon at the annual meeting of the Church's Synod held in Horsham, Victoria. It will be known as the Lutheran Brotherhood of Australia.

The Synod also voted to retain membership in the Lutheran World Federation and to continue participation in the Lutheran mission in New Guinea. It co-operates in the mission with the Commission on Younger Churches and Orphaned Missions of the National Lutheran Council (U.S.A.), the American Lutheran Church, and the Neuen-dettelsau Mission Society of Germany.

The question of L. W. F. affiliation came up as a result of the denomination's proposed union with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, which is not a member of the Federation. Theses of agreement, drawn up by an intersynodical committee of the two Churches, were accepted by the U. E. L. C. A. Synod at the meeting, leaving further steps toward union to be discussed at meetings of the intersynodical group.

*Washington, D. C.*—A resolution warning newspaper editors against letting down the bars against blasphemous language in the press was adopted by the Union of Holy Name Societies of the Archdiocese of Washington.

The resolution deplored "the increasing frequency with which blasphemous words are spelled out in our daily newspapers."

"Such indiscriminate and uncalled-for use of blasphemy," it said, "affronts the religious sensibilities of all people who believe in God and respect His name and has a particularly harmful effect on young and immature readers."

*Dallas, Tex.*—How 20,000 gospel tracts were dropped behind the

Iron Curtain by balloon this summer was described here by the man who supervised the project.

Arrangements were made with a press in Switzerland, owned by an American woman, to print gospel leaflets in Russian, Polish and Czech, Mr. Marvin Sheffield, president of the General Conference of the Congregational Methodist Church, said. A factory in the Netherlands turned out 20,000 balloons for them in a little over a week.

A little group of "Bible-thinking Germans" who had been working on the project in Nuernberg released 5,000 of the tract-bearing balloons. The remaining 15,000 were sent on their way to Communist countries in batches of 5,000 a night whenever the wind was favorable.

*Washington, D. C.* — Plans for the first Lutheran high school in the nation's capital have been launched here.

A Lutheran high school association has been formed by members of Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod churches in the Washington area. The denomination now maintains high schools in 13 Midwestern cities.

There are 16 Missouri Synod churches in the capital area with more than 6,000 members. Several of these churches maintain day classes for younger children, but formation of the high school association represents the first step towards the development of a full-fledged elementary and secondary school system.

*Berlin.* — A delegation of thirty-six prominent churchmen to represent the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKID) at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, Ill., next August, was appointed at sessions of the EKID Council here.

The delegates will include Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin, chairman of the EKID Council, Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hannover, president of the Lutheran World Federation, Pastor Martin Niemoeller, president of the Evangelical Church of Hessen and Nassau and EKID foreign secretary, and Dr. Reinhold von Thadden-Trieglaff, president of the German Evangelical Church Day (*Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag*) movement.

*Munich, Germany.* — The "new look" announced in Hungarian internal policies by Premier Imre Nagy last June is, by all accounts, having an effect on religious life in the Communist satellite country.

There are signs that the government's rabid antichurch policy — which probably was stronger in Hungary than in any other Communist land — is being gradually relaxed.

Articles attacking the Roman Catholic hierarchy, priests and the attitude of the faithful have almost disappeared from the Communist

press. The hierarchy is obviously relieved, even though the respite may prove temporary.

*Cairo.*— Egyptian Interior Ministry has ordered that permits be granted immediately to the Jewish Community Council in Alexandria and to various Christian groups in provincial towns to build places of worship for their communities.

Requests for erecting non-Moslem places of worship frequently had been delayed or ignored in the past.

As a result of the new order, a Jewish synagogue will rise on Moharrem street in Alexandria; three Coptic Orthodox churches at Kafr el-Sheikh and Mit Bishar in the Nile Delta and at Port Fuad on the Suez Canal; a Coptic Catholic church at Luxor in Upper Egypt; and a Latin (Roman Catholic) church and convent in Kafr-el-Zayat in the Nile Delta.

In addition, two half-completed churches—one Coptic the other Protestant—whose permits had been revoked, will be finished.

*Copenhagen.*— Mrs. Bodil Koch, 50, a graduate theologian and leader in Denmark's feminist movement, was named Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs in the new Social Democratic cabinet.

Wife of Hal Koch, who is professor of church history at the University of Copenhagen, Mrs. Koch served in the same Cabinet post in 1950. She is a member of Parliament and mother of four children.

*Racine, Wis.*— The board of education here voted to deny the use of a public school on Sunday mornings to a Lutheran group for church services.

It rejected a request from the Rev. M. W. Albrecht, pastor of a newly organized congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The action taken by the school commissioners was based on the advice of a board member, attorney Manny S. Brown, that use of the school by a church group would violate the state constitution.

The congregation had asked permission to hold services in the school until a church building is constructed.

*St. Paul, Minn.*— One of the greatest problems facing the Church in America today is "the undergirding of our rural life with an adequate religious faith."

This was stressed to the National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country here by Dr. A. D. Mattson, professor at Augustana Theological Seminary, Rock Island, Ill. The convocation was sponsored by the National Council of Churches.

Delivering the opening convocation address, Dr. Mattson said that two-thirds of the rural population of the United States—40 million people—do not belong to any church or denomination, and that there are states where the proportion of rural people attached to a church is as low as 10 and 12 per cent.

Thus, he pointed out, 13 million children and young people of school age in rural areas receive no religious instruction.

"The rural areas are the sources of population," he said, "and the character of these areas will largely determine the character of the country as a whole.

"More than half of those reared in rural areas migrate to cities. If the religious needs of these young people are not provided for during the formative years of their lives, it is not probable that they will creatively participate in the work of the churches in the cities to which they migrate."

*Chicago.*—Delegations from four Lutheran denominations, with a combined membership of nearly two million, met here to consider a proposed form of organization which may merge them into one Church in 1957 or '58.

They comprised the Joint Union Committee, known as the Committee of 36, which represents the Evangelical Lutheran, American Lutheran, United Evangelical Lutheran, and Lutheran Free Churches.

The Augustana Lutheran Church, which had participated in the union discussions for a time, formally withdrew in November, 1952, on the grounds that it was primarily interested in a merger of all Lutheran Churches.

All five bodies are members of the American Lutheran Conference.

At their national conventions last year the four negotiating Churches agreed on doctrinal matters by accepting a "united testimony on faith and life."

In its sessions here the union committee attempted to frame a joint statement of polity and shape an organizational structure for the proposed united Church.

The committee voted to meet here again December 7—9 to "finalize" the union plan it will present to the four Churches.

Dr. O. G. Malmin of Minneapolis, editor of the *Lutheran Herald*, who attended the meeting, said, "We believe it would be progress to make one Church where there were four before."

Dr. Hans C. Jersild, Blair, Nebr., president of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, presided at the sessions.



*Louisville, Ky.*—Unity among Lutheran Churches was emphasized at the biennial convention of the American Federation of Lutheran Brotherhoods here.

Speakers on panel discussions of home missions, scouting, and Lutheran fellowship stressed ways in which the six groups constituting the Federation could work more closely together.

The Federation includes laymen of the American Lutheran Church, Augustana Lutheran Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Suomi Synod, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the United Lutheran Church. Some members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod attended convention sessions as observers.

*Berlin.*—Communist leaders, adept at rewriting history, have turned this talent to the field of religion and nominated a "hero" of their own as "the real leader of the Reformation" in place of Martin Luther.

This was disclosed by Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin, head of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKID), in his Reformation Sunday sermon at East Berlin's Mary Church.

Denouncing the "attempt to minimize Luther," Dr. Dibelius said that children in East German schools are being taught that Thomas Muenzer, German Anabaptist leader during the Peasant Revolt and advocate of "Communist theocracy," brought about the Reformation.

*Jefferson City, Mo.*—A way out of the controversy over transportation of parochial students in public school busses was offered here by Missouri Attorney General John M. Dalton.

He ruled that public school districts may sell their school busses and enter into contracts with private bus operators for the transportation of pupils.

Mr. Dalton previously held that private bus operators who have contracts with public school districts may also transport pupils who attend parochial schools. The latest ruling apparently clears the way for transportation of parochial students under the auspices of public school districts.

*Rome.*—Pope Pius XII has granted permission to the University of St. Louis, a Jesuit institution in St. Louis, Mo., to build in his name a new memorial library which will contain microfilm reproductions of more than 600,000 manuscripts in the Vatican Library.

L. W. SPITZ