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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE QUMRAN SECT

Under the heading "The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity" Prof. Oscar Cullmann of the University of Basel, in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (December 1955), points out, among other things, that the difference between the theology of Christianity and that of the Qumran sect leads us to hold to the originality of the early Christian Church. The French historian Ernest Renan (1823—1892) suggested that Christianity began as a sort of Essenism. But the recently found Qumran texts show that "the evolution which one generally supposes from an early narrow Judaistic Christianity to a later universalistic Hellenistic Christianity is an artificial *schema* which does not correspond to historical reality." There are indeed certain points of contact between early Christianity and the Qumran sect, pertaining not to any relatedness between its "Teacher of Righteousness" and Jesus, nor in the way their person and work may have been conceived by their first disciples, but in other teachings and especially in the life and organization of the two communities. Thus the members of the Jewish sect called themselves the "new covenant" and "the poor." They, moreover, had a "common meal" and "baptisms," or baths, as also a "community of goods," though at these points there occur also differences, especially concerning the central position of Christ, for whose stress on freedom from the Law and asceticism there is no counterpart in the Qumran texts. The Qumran sect's "Teacher of Righteousness" lived, died, and was honored after his death as a *prophet*, but never as the Suffering Servant, who died vicariously for the sins of the world. The texts say nothing of an atoning death as do the Gospels. So also is Pauline theology, which orients everything from the central saving act of Christ's expiatory death, fundamentally different from that of the Qumran texts. The decisive difference in Christology proves the originality of the early Christian Church.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

THE QUMRAN SCROLLS AND THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE

The *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (Nos. 3 and 4; July and October 1955) analyzes very interestingly the similarities and differences between the Qumran Scrolls and the Epistles and Gospels of St. John. Between the Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine literature there exist indeed striking similarities of expression and thought, but there is a basic difference between their theologies, and that is Christ. Both

conceive of the world as divided into two camps of light and darkness and see these camps arranged under personal leadership. For Qumran the leaders are the two created spirits, or angels of light and of darkness (truth and perversion); for St. John, however, the leader of light is the uncreated Word, while the leader of evil is the prince of this world. And Christ is the point of difference between John and Qumran with respect to the ultimate constituent of the sons of light (p.418f.). . . . "There remains a tremendous chasm between Qumran thought and Christianity. No matter how impressive the terminological and ideological similarities are, the difference that Jesus Christ makes between the two cannot be minimized. . . . The Essene sectarians were not Christians, and the recognition of this will prevent many misinterpretations. On the other hand, it is even more incorrect to turn the early Christians into Essenes. . . . We do not think that the adaptation of Essene terminology and ideology to Christianity in the NT makes Christianity an Essenism, any more than the use of Platonic terminology and ideology by the Fathers makes it a Platonism. Christianity is too unique to be classified as any earlier 'ism'" (p.571).

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

FRENCH PROTESTANTISM TODAY

Today when our interest in mission work in France is perhaps greater than before because of the larger missionary projects of our church in that country, it may be well for us to consider the many problems which Christianity there faces, as these are presented under the above heading by Prof. Paul Ricoeur, professor of philosophy at the University of Strasbourg, in the *Christian Century* (October 26, 1955). The present troubles of the French people may be traced principally to three causes: that the Reformation never gained a permanent foothold in France, that the 18th-century enlightenment radically disturbed France more than any other country, and that since the middle of the 19th century the French working class has become thoroughly dechristianized. The workers' desertion of the churches accounts largely for the widespread conversion of the French people to Communism. In view of these problems, French Protestantism is seeking new attitudes toward Roman Catholicism, for while many features, such as the intensified worship of the Virgin Mary and the claims of political Catholicism, have widened the disagreement between the two church bodies, nevertheless there are problems which both denominations have in common and which call for a complete renewal of their relations to each other. A very serious problem in France is that of the thoroughly secularized civilization that faces all

Christian groups. French Protestants no longer have the illusion of a Christian civilization. This problem of secularization has affected especially the French school system, which renders religious teaching or Christian culture impossible. An attempt has been made to establish private schools in which religious training is an important objective, but these are as yet too small and few to exert a widespread wholesome influence. Communism, however, remains the greatest problem of all, and its solution is the great challenge of French Protestantism. May it not be a challenge confronting also our church?

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Madrid.—The Spanish government closed down the Evangelical Theological Seminary here, believed to be the only institution of its kind in Spain. No explanation was given for the action. The seminary has been in existence for about 70 years. It had been jointly sponsored by the Spanish Evangelical Church and the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church.

A chapel connected with the seminary was allowed to remain open. The Rev. Theodor Fliedner, chapel pastor who has been associated with the seminary for many years, declined to comment on the closure order. Last year Pastor Fliedner, a native of Germany, had some trouble with the Spanish authorities, but the difficulties were overcome.

An American embassy spokesman said Ambassador John Davis Lodge had sent a report on the closing to the State Department in Washington.

Madrid.—The Spanish Evangelical Church protested to the Ministry of Interior against the government's closure of the Evangelical Theological Seminary here. The church message contended that the closing violated Article VI of the Spanish Constitution, which provides that "no one will be molested on account of his religion, creed, or the private practice of his cult."

The protest was signed by the Rev. Gutierrez Marin, president of the Spanish Evangelical Church, which was formed in 1950 as a federation of Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, and others. It had sponsored the seminary with the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church.

Minneapolis, Minn.—A white Lutheran clergyman is playing a leading role in aiding the 60,000 Negroes of Montgomery, Ala. (population 120,000) in their boycott of the city's bus system, the *Minneapolis Tribune* reported. He is the Rev. Robert S. Graetz, 27, pastor of

Trinity Lutheran Church in Montgomery, which has some 200 members. All of them are Negroes. The boycott is a protest against "an ironclad segregated seating arrangement under which frequently discourteous drivers can hold seats open for whites no matter how many Negroes are left standing," the *Tribune* article said.

Because of his aid to the Negro cause, Pastor Graetz was arrested by the Montgomery county sheriff and briefly detained at the county jail, two tires on his car have been slashed, and his pregnant wife has had to answer eight or ten abusive telephone calls a day, the *Tribune* reported. Pastor Graetz has supported the movement—he calls it a "protest" rather than a boycott—from his pulpit and by becoming one of a few white car-owners who have joined with some 300 Negroes in making their cars available to transport the protesters.

The clergyman also has sent a weekly newsletter about the boycott to other white ministers in the city "to acquaint you with certain facts which have been almost completely overlooked (intentionally or otherwise) by the local press." The letters have explained the position of the Negroes as well as the state and city laws on bus segregation.

Because his church receives financial support from the American Lutheran Church board of America missions, Mr. Graetz sent a full account of his activities to ALC headquarters in Columbus, Ohio.

Tribune reporter Richard Kleeman contacted the denomination's headquarters by telephone but said he was unable to learn whether any action supporting or reproving Mr. Graetz is in the wind. However, Mr. Kleeman said, "there was this indication. I asked the ALC official to whom I spoke whether the Church favors racial integration in general.

"Yes," he replied quietly, "that would be the Christian way, wouldn't it?"

Geneva.—*Le Courrier*, Roman Catholic daily published here, criticized the Spanish government for closing down the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Madrid. It called the closure "utterly improper." In an article written by its editor in chief, Rene Leyvraz, the paper declared that the action would embarrass Catholics in various parts of the world who were insisting on their right to maintain Catholic schools.

"It is not by injustices of this kind toward a minority community that General Franco will defend the Catholic faith," Mr. Leyvraz said. "He is only compromising it in the eyes of the whole world, where Catholics everywhere are claiming the right to open or maintain their own schools."

**BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NEWS BUREAU
OF THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL**

Minneapolis.—The Lutheran Free Church has formally withdrawn from union negotiations with the Evangelical, American, and United Evangelical Lutheran Churches. The action by the LFC's Committee on Relations with Other Lutheran Bodies was taken as a result of the negative outcome of the recent referendum conducted among local congregations of the Free Church. Of 327 congregations participating, 210 or 64 per cent approved a proposed organizational basis, but 117 congregations or 36 per cent voted against it, the question thus failing by 35 votes to gain the three-fourths majority necessary for adoption.

New York.—Mixed marriages and a tendency to confuse political assimilation with a turning toward Roman Catholicism were seen as the greatest threats to Protestants in Latin America by a German pastor who spent four months visiting Lutheran congregations in Central and South America. He was Dr. Johannes Pfeiffer of West Berlin, who undertook the visitation tour on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation's Committee on Latin America.

Visiting headquarters of the National Lutheran Council here, Dr. Pfeiffer said he found many Lutherans, including some active and even leading members of Lutheran congregations in Latin American republics, had married Roman Catholic wives and were rearing their children as Roman Catholics. The problem of mixed marriages was aggravated in the thoroughly Roman Catholic and Spanish-speaking nations by the feeling that in order to make the children fully assimilated citizens of those countries they "just had to be reared as Roman Catholics," the Berlin pastor added. Since he found the idea that "joining the Spanish-speaking element meant joining the Roman Catholic schools" so prevalent even among Protestant immigrants, Dr. Pfeiffer stressed the importance of creating good Protestant schools along with strong, indigenous Protestant churches.

On his tour, Dr. Pfeiffer visited Lutheran congregations and as yet unorganized Lutheran groups in Mexico, five Central American countries, Venezuela, and Colombia. At Cali, Colombia, he met with Dr. Wilhelm Hahn of Heidelberg, who at the same time and for similar purposes had visited countries farther south. The two German pastors were the first to undertake extended visitations tours of Lutheran (chiefly German) congregations in Latin America on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation, and Dr. Pfeiffer found his task of significance.

One veteran Lutheran pastor in Mexico told him he was the first clerical visitor from Germany who had come to see him in over twenty years, but elsewhere, too, pastors as well as laymen greeted him as "a fresh breeze brought into our parish from over there." Particularly important, said Dr. Pfeiffer, was the fact that Dr. Hahn and he could visit the Latin American Lutherans not as representatives of a national German church but of the world-wide and nationality-wise unlimited LWF.

Reminders that Latin American Lutherans belonged to such a world-wide communion were of specific importance in countries like Colombia, where Protestants facing a militant Roman Catholic Church "live in the danger to overestimate the inward and outward power of the Roman Church," he said.

In Venezuela and Colombia Dr. Pfeiffer saw the first steps toward formation of individual congregations into synods, mainly to strengthen the Lutheran efforts in "works of love and mercy." He also found more or less scattered Lutheran groups in dire need of spiritual care throughout the Central American republics, particularly in Guatemala, which once had a large and flourishing German colony and a Lutheran parish with its own pastor some thirty years ago.

The Germans of Guatemala were scattered and impoverished as a result of World War II, and their situation is still precarious as Guatemala formally remains in a state of war with Germany, Dr. Pfeiffer continued. Nonetheless, he said, the existence of a German Lutheran group of at least a thousand souls in Guatemala makes the calling of a German-speaking pastor to serve them a necessity.

Similarly he found active and inactive Lutheran groups of various sizes in Costa Rica, San Salvador, and Nicaragua, and expressed hope that the LWF will soon be able to find a pastor willing and able to undertake a ministry to all these groups.

Minneapolis.—Two pastors of the Northwest Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America were voted out of the ministry when a special convention of the synod here upheld their conviction on charges of heresy.

Attended by 155 pastors and 99 laymen, the special convention on January 26 was called to consider "irregular and disturbing doctrinal presentations" attributed to three young pastors in the Milwaukee area of Wisconsin. Only one dissenting voice was heard as the convention decided by a voice vote to unfrock the Rev. George P. Crist, Jr., 31, of Bethlehem Lutheran Church at Durham, a suburb of Milwaukee.

Madras, India.—The Lutheran churches of Japan have a combined membership of 10,785 baptized members, 6,207 of whom are communing members. The 230 Sunday schools maintained by nine Lutheran church groups and missions have a total of 20,635 pupils. In addition, 69 Lutheran kindergartens are attended by 5,608 children. These figures were reported at the All-Asia Lutheran Conference here in a general statistical report from the Lutherans of Japan. Included in the report were figures supplied by the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and eight Lutheran mission societies.

These societies were the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland; the Augustana Lutheran Mission; the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; the Evangelical Lutheran Church; the Lutheran Brethren Mission; the Norwegian Lutheran Mission; the Suomi Synod Missions; the mission of the Lutheran Free Church of Norway and the Norwegian Missionary Society. Together these groups reported 101 organized Japanese congregations and 154 as yet unorganized worshipping groups, served by a total of 141 Japanese, of whom 62 are ordained and 79 lay personnel, as well as 254 missionaries, including 104 ordained men actually in the field.

The three Theological Seminaries maintained by the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland, and the Missouri Synod, reported a combined total of 59 students, with 44 of them attending the first-named seminary.

The Bible schools maintained by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Brethren Mission, and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission reported a total of 71 students, about evenly divided among the three institutions.

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church reported 7,641 of the total baptized membership. Missouri Synod Missions report 966 baptized members; the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland, 827 members, while the membership of the other groups ranged from 315 reported by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission to 38 by the Suomi Synod Mission.

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church reported the largest number of Japanese personnel, including 51 ordained and 15 unordained workers. The Evangelical Lutheran Church reported the largest number of missionaries, including 26 ordained and 15 unordained mission workers.