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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

LIKE COMING OUT INTO THE FRESH AIR

In his review of *Luther's Works: Selected Psalms I* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, Vol. XII) Dr. W. R. Cannon, dean of the Candler School of Theology of Emory University (Georgia), writes *inter alia* in *Religion in Life* (Summer 1956): "The thought of Martin Luther is scarcely less important than his work. . . . After Luther did his gigantic work on earth, the spirit of that work lived and continued to operate in the lives of his followers through the great ideas he bequeathed to posterity. Those same ideas operate today in as effective a manner as they operated during the sixteenth century. It is like going out into fresh air after a long stay in a stuffy room when we turn away from the complex expressions of contemporary theology to the clear, candid, straightforward speech of this great theologian. If one should try to rank Luther, theologically speaking, one would put him in the first category of the thinkers of all times. Luther would take his place side by side with Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Calvin. Among Protestant minds there is none greater than Luther. I personally am glad that the Press released Volume XII first. That is as good an introduction to Luther as I know anything about. Luther, primarily, was a preacher. Here you have an example of his preaching skill at its very best. Therefore, exposition is the proper door to open to enter into an acquaintance with the thinking of the sixteenth-century giant. . . . In each one of his treatments Doctor Luther uses the method of verse-by-verse exposition. Look at the second psalm, for example. There is an entire sermon under each verse. A modern preacher would have in Psalm 2 a whole series of evening messages, as many as there are verses in the psalm. . . . These volumes will come out, two or three a year, for the next several years. Every minister should own them. They should be a part of any theologically minded person's library."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

ELOHIM AND ELOAH

Under this heading Norman Walker, in *Vetus Testamentum* (April 1956), suggests that אלהים after all may have been a singular noun, a fact which the Masoretes misunderstood, so that they pointed it as a plural. He writes: "A. Jirku ('Die Mimation in den Nord-semitischen Sprachen,' *Biblica*, XXXIV [1953], pp. 78—80) has shown that in the West-Semitic Dialects of Palestine-Syria, during the first third of

the second millennium B. C., nine place names and one personal name were mimated and ended in —m, but that between 1800—1500 B. C. this mimation fell away both among the West-Semites and in Babylonia. Generalizing from these instances, he supposes that certain words in Hebrew, pointed in the M. T. [Masoretic text] as though plurals, like Teraphim, Urim, Tummim, and Sanwerim, and yet treated as singulars, are in reality mimated singulars left over in Canaanite and taken over by Hebrew. This makes one wonder whether after all ׀להים, where it signifies 'God' as distinct from 'gods,' is really a mimated singular. If so, this would account for the late appearance of the unmimated form 'elōah. The difference between singular and plural masculine nouns must originally have lain not in the final —m, but in the length of the last vowel, so that 'God' was 'elōhim, but 'gods' 'elōhīm. The M. T. confuses the two, of which the former should properly be ׀להים as against the latter ׀להים." If this principle of mimation may be accepted as true in the case of ׀להים; then its bearing on exegetical inferences may not be insignificant. Luther, for example, believed that the plural name for God ׀להים used with the singular of the verb, is a link in a long and strong chain of evidences and points out the Holy Trinity in the O. T. Mimation in this case would eliminate such sort of reasoning."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

PAUL HUTCHINSON, EDITOR

Paul Hutchinson was managing editor of the *Christian Century* from 1924 to 1947 and editor from 1947 to 1956. He died quite suddenly in the Baptist hospital at Beaumont, Tex., at the age of 66 years (April 10, 1890—April 15, 1956). The April 25 issue of the *Christian Century* offers tributes to the deceased from various members of the editorial staff, a former fellow missionary of his in China, and his pastor in Evanston, Ill. They are for the greater part brief, sober, and moderate, emphasizing points of character and personality to which also a Biblical theologian may agree, at least so far as he could judge Dr. Hutchinson from his many literary contributions to his periodical. But they frankly point out also the line of divergence between liberal theology and traditional Christian theology. Charles Clayton Morrison writes of him: "For theology he had only a secondary interest." Halford E. Luccock (Simeon Stylites) says: "Paul Hutchinson's spirit is well expressed in his own words, written just thirty years ago. Writing of the church he said: 'The church has had its hours of conformity, of regularity, of walking in well-marked roads. But these have not been the high hours. Whenever the moment comes

when the church is ready to break the trammels of convention, to forsake the trodden paths, to mount again for some new circuit through some new wilderness, or along some new border, then it comes a flame once more.' His pastor, Harold A. Bosley, put this into his tribute: "Paul Hutchinson was a ready and willing fighter for freedom of thought and speech. He gloried in the freedom of the pulpit of our church." All these expressions witness to the deep tragedy of liberalism in its abysmal ignorance of Christ's theological directive: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32).

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

NEW PROOF FOR THE HISTORICAL DEPENDABILITY OF THE BIBLE

The Catholic Biblical Quarterly (April 1956) reports, on the basis of a news item in the *New York Times* (February 1956), the successful deciphering of a Neo-Babylonian cuneiform tablet recording important events between 626—594 B.C. The clay tablet was translated by Dr. D. J. Wiseman of the British Museum, who will soon publish the version with a commentary. Dr. W. F. Albright, who for several years has been in communication with Dr. Wiseman, shares the discoverer's enthusiasm, as the report says. The tablet gives a contemporary account of the siege of Jerusalem in 597 by Nebuchadnezzar, the capture and deportation of King Jehoiachin (cf. 2 Kings 24:8-16), and the appointment of his uncle Zedekiah as king. The tablet recounts "many of the main political and religious events between 626 and 594 B.C.," e.g., the battle of Carchemish in 605 and some previously unknown happenings, as, for example, a battle in 601 in which the Egyptians defeated the Babylonians. More complete and authoritative information on this tablet is to be given in future issues of the *CBQ*.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

WE HAVE NO REASON TO LOSE COURAGE

The Christian Century (April 25, 1956) publishes the "last public words of Paul Hutchinson," late editor of the periodical just named. From April 10 to 12 of this year, according to the report, he gave the C. I. Jones Memorial Lectures at Rayne Memorial Methodist Church in New Orleans, speaking on the theme "The Churches in the Crisis of These Times." According to Rev. A. M. Serex, the minister of the church, Dr. Hutchinson concluded his lectures with the following words, which were to be his last public message: "What I have been saying these days has had behind it a hope that it may

help some of you to see the gravity of the position in which the church finds itself in this hour. But it has not been brought forward as a cause for discouragement, complacency, a superficial optimism, contentment with the traditional and the routine. These are states of mind we need to get rid of. But we have no reason to lose courage. We have a gospel which is the word of life. We have a Lord and Master who is the answer to men's needs. We have a fighting chance. What more can we ask?" We can only conjecture what Dr. Hutchinson meant by "contentment with the traditional" as "a state of mind we need to get rid of." If by the phrase he meant adherence to the Biblical truth, then no conservative believer is able to share his view, for he certainly is eager to continue in Christ's Word (John 8:31,32). However, just because of that fact he repeats the last sentences of Dr. Hutchinson with divine confidence and courage: "We have no reason to lose courage. We have a Gospel which is the Word of life. We have a Lord and Master who is the answer to men's needs. We have a fighting chance. What more can we ask?"

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Munich, Germany.—Lutheran Bishop Hans Meiser of Munich, one of Germany's best-known Protestant churchmen, died here of heart failure at the age of 75. He had retired from active episcopal duties and the chairmanship of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) in May of last year. Bishop Meiser was largely responsible for the establishment of the VELKD, in which ten of the 13 regional Lutheran Churches in East and West Germany are consolidated. Its membership of over 18,000,000 comprises nearly half the number of Protestants in Germany.

Prominently identified with ecumenical bodies, such as the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches, Bishop Meiser visited the United States in 1936 and 1948. He was pastor of the Home Mission in his native town of Nuremberg, 1911—15, and of St. Matthew's Church in Munich, 1915—22. In 1933 he returned to Nuremberg to direct the newly founded preachers' seminary there. He was elected a bishop in 1933.

A vigorous opponent of the Hitler regime, Bishop Meiser was credited with having made the Lutheran Church of Bavaria one of the main resistance groups against the Nazis. In 1955 he was awarded the Great Cross, highest class of the Order of Merit of the West Germany Federal Republic, by President Theodore Heuss.

Omaha, Nebr.—By an overwhelming vote the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches approved a proposed merger with the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1957.

The action came after an extraordinary all-night session brought about by the bitter opposition of an antimerger minority. In an effort to block the merger, opponents proposed that the minutes of executive committee meetings during the last two years be read. This was ordered when the opponents contended that a summary did not reveal all the facts. Sixteen ministers took turns reading the voluminous reports for a period of nine and a half hours. Then, after further discussion, the delegates voted 1,314 to 101 in favor of a resolution approving the report of the executive committee, which included plans for the proposed union. The vote meant approval of everything the executive committee had done toward bringing about the merger.

A second enabling resolution authorized the calling of the first General Synod of the new United Church of Christ at Cleveland, June 25—27, and elected those nominated as delegates to the synod meeting. The vote on this resolution was 1,310 for, 179 against, and 11 abstaining. Immediately after passage of the enabling legislation, the delegates approved without opposition another resolution calling upon the General Synod of the United Church of Christ to keep the door open for any dissenting church after union had been accomplished. The resolution expressed deep grief for any break in the communion.

Meanwhile there were indications that new legal battles might loom over the approved merger. Spokesmen for the antimerger faction made it clear that some local churches were determined to "preserve their traditions" to the point of litigation. One leader of this movement, the Rev. Malcolm Burton of Pontiac, Mich., said that although no legal action was contemplated in the near future, this did not mean that such action could not be carried through later.

The Evangelical and Reformed Church is scheduled to discuss the merger at its biennial convention starting August 31 at Lancaster, Pa.

The proposed new church, with 2,000,000 congregants, will rank as the seventh largest Protestant body in the country. It has been under consideration for 14 years.

A basis of union was adopted by the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1948. Merger was delayed, however, by litigation initiated in 1950 by the Cadman Memorial Church of Brooklyn, N. Y., which contested the right of the denomination's General Council to effect it. The Brooklyn church was supported by a national Committee for the Continuation of Congre-

gational Christian Churches. In March 1954 the New York State Court of Appeals brought the long litigation to an end by denying a rehearing of its decision upholding the merger.

The following October the executive bodies of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church met in Cleveland, Ohio, and approved the merger plan. Last June top officials of both Churches, at a meeting in Columbus, Ohio, set the merger date for June 25—27, 1957, in Cleveland.

Washington, D. C.—A stamp issued by the Saar depicting Albrecht Dürer's famous painting "Praying Hands" was selected for the first annual award of the Collectors of Religion on Stamps Society (COROS). It was cited as the most outstanding 1955 religious design.

Albany, N. Y.—Declaring that obscene literature "fosters crime" the United Lutheran Synod of New York and New England directed its social missions committee to study how best to "educate" the membership concerning the evil. Delegates to the synod's 28th annual meeting also urged the commission, as well as ministers and laymen, to express their concern over the situation to "members of the appropriate legislative bodies."

Strong opposition to penalizing ministers who participate in the social-security program by reducing their pensions was voiced in another adopted resolution.

Chicago.—Walther League youth caravans sponsored by the Board for Young People's Work of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will visit 163 congregations in the United States and Canada between June 18 and August 13. Each of the 11 groups will comprise three young people who are from 16 to 21 years old and have volunteered their summer vacationtime to "alert congregations and youth groups to the terrific potential in modern Christian youth work" as represented in the Walther League program.

The Rev. Elmer N. Witt, executive secretary of the League, said it is hoped the caravans will "help highlight the need for stimulating youth programs in our congregations."

The 33 young people selected for the caravans were chosen from among more than 900 volunteers. All of them have attended one or more Lutheran Service Volunteer schools. Before departing on the eight-week project, they will have completed a two-month correspondence course in youth-work techniques and a four-day briefing session at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Ill.