

Concordia Theological Monthly

Volume 31

Article 43

6-1-1960

Theological Observer

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Recommended Citation

Mueller, John Theodore (1960) "Theological Observer," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 31, Article 43.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol31/iss1/43>

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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

BRIEF ITEMS

Porto Alegre, Brazil.—"Lutheran churches in Latin America are growing in stature, increasing in momentum," and exhibiting "evidence of maturity and mission," the Lutheran World Federation Executive Committee heard at its meeting here.

The director of the LWF Committee on Latin America, Dr. Stewart W. Herman of New York, said in his report that "statistical figures indicated a baptized membership of nearly 900,000—although the number of pastors is not keeping pace with the need, let alone the opportunities, which face us."

Dr. Herman also listed a number of "significant developments (which) may be pointed out as the harbingers of new departures into very promising directions." They were:

- meetings of considerable consequence . . . between the various Lutheran theological faculties in South America, located at Jose C. Paz and Villa Ballester, Argentina, and at Sao Leopoldo and Porto Alegre, Brazil;

- the cultivation of . . . relations on a country-by-country basis among Lutheran groups until now kept apart by divergent synodical traditions or national origins;

- the discerning management of, and contribution to, revolving loan funds which Lutheran churches of various countries make available to groups in Latin America for such purposes as buying church sites and erecting buildings on them;

- greater participation in specific ecumenical projects;

- the waxing readiness to join forces in mission work;

- the renewed attention to the production of Lutheran literature, currently highlighted by the completion of a new hymnal and service book and a pastor's service book, both in Spanish, and by plans to begin work on a \$60,000 edition of Luther's works in the same language; and

- recent efforts to work toward a broad social service program.

Dr. Herman said the Latin American committee was "heartily grateful for the fact that the meeting to which this account is submitted is occurring on Latin American soil."

Latin America, he added, "may thus be seen to contain an increasingly important part of the worldwide Church of the Reformation."

This was the first time in LWF history that its Executive Committee met in the Western Hemisphere, outside the United States. Numerous leaders of Latin American churches attended as invited observers.

The Latin America committee itself was scheduled to meet in Porto Alegre in the two days immediately following the Executive Committee sessions.

Porto Alegre, Brazil.—How the Lutheran World Federation's new "research professor" plans to begin his first task of providing Protestants with a fresh evaluation of modern Roman Catholic doctrine and practice was detailed here.

In its report to the meeting of the LWF Executive Committee, the federation's Special Commission on Interconfessional Research included a statement of what Prof. K. E. Skydsgaard, on leave from the University of Copenhagen, will be doing under its guidance during the next few years.

Text of the statement follows:

During the coming years Professor Skydsgaard will concentrate his study primarily on Roman Catholicism as it appears in contemporary theology and church life. He will plan to publish a book outlining contemporary Roman Catholicism which would be a study of the controversial problems which are especially discussed in the theology of the Reformation.

Within this framework Professor Skydsgaard will use some time for studying the

problem of Scripture and tradition, especially in view of recent developments in Mariology and other problems. Since he is also the chairman of the Commission on Tradition and Traditions in the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches, Professor Skydsgaard's contribution will at this point also be of specific importance for ecumenical work.

Since Roman Catholicism is a complexity of theological and practical problems, it should also be studied at the very places where Roman Catholic piety has its expressions. Therefore Professor Skydsgaard plans to travel to important Roman Catholic centers, which will include a visit to Rome. He will enlarge his experience through personal contacts and will also give some specific consideration to the Pope's plans to call an "ecumenical" council.

The commission has also given special attention to the problems which arise on the mission field where Roman Catholicism is using a method which very often irritates the non-Roman churches. It has been the commission's hope that Professor Skydsgaard may even have the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the problems here involved through co-operation with the Commission on World Mission.

Next summer Professor Skydsgaard is planning to hold a small seminar mainly for graduate students from Scandinavian countries in order to study the important decisions of the Tridentine (Trent) Council. During the follow-up he hopes to continue such seminars on a broader international level. It was felt of primary interest that Professor Skydsgaard's abilities should be used for the instruction of younger theologians who could then contribute to this important work.

It is Professor Skydsgaard's intention to develop a library which would include standard works on Roman Catholicism, especially the encyclopedias, historical and dogmatical studies describing Roman Catholicism. This library will at present be located in the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Copenhagen, of which Professor Skydsgaard is the director. The library will be kept as

a separate unit until the final decision is made as to the location of the planned foundation.

The foundation referred to is an independent unit planned to be the ultimate vehicle for the Lutheran program of inter-confessional research. This foundation cannot be established until authorization is obtained at the federation's 1963 assembly in Helsinki.

Meanwhile the special commission, with official sanction, not only has launched the research program but also is preparing a draft constitution for the foundation itself. It informed the Executive Committee that the document would be ready for presentation at the latter's 1961 meeting.

To support Professor Skydsgaard and his research assistant in their prefoundation activities and to cover the cost of travel for its own meetings, the commission said it would need \$25,000 a year from LWF member churches and national committees.

Toward the budget for the program's first year, which began on Feb. 1, it reported that \$16,040 had been granted to it by the American, German, and Swedish national committees and the 6,000-member Lutheran Church in Italy.

In presenting the commission's report its secretary, Director Vilmos Vajta of the LWF Department of Theology, declared that "the support of the member churches and of the Executive Committee itself for this activity is of primary importance for the life of the Lutheran churches throughout the world."

His plea for support was reinforced by the commission's chairman, Bishop Herman Dietzfelbinger of Munich, who is head of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria and an Executive Committee member.

Porto Alegre, Brazil.—Prominent theological scholars representing a wide range of confessional and personal positions on the 16th century Protestant Reformation will gather next August for an international re-

search congress convened by the Lutheran World Federation, an LWF official disclosed here.

Presenting his report at the meeting of the federation's Executive Committee here, Director Vilmos Vajta of the Department of Theology said invitations have been extended to "all those who have been brought to the attention (of the conveners)."

Dr. Vajta said he expected that "all leading personalities in the field of Luther research," representing "all shades of theological opinion," would participate in the congress, which is to take place at Münster, Germany, from Aug. 8 to 13. This will be the second International Congress for Luther Research, the first having been held in Aarhus, Denmark, in 1956.

He explained that although the LWF Department of Theology joined with a continuation committee of the Aarhus congress in issuing the invitations, the federation's connection with the Münster gathering is "loose" and involves no effort to control "freedom of research."

It will be "a research congress for experts with free participation on the part of all those who are connected with research in Luther's theology or the Reformation," Dr. Vajta stressed.

Some 100 outstanding scholars are expected to attend. Their discussions will center in the relations between the Reformer Martin Luther and his leading collaborator, the German humanist Philip Melancthon, since this year marks the 400th anniversary of the latter's death.

"We have succeeded," Dr. Vajta said, "in securing the co-operation of such top-ranking Luther scholars as the following" to read papers at the congress:

From the United States, Dr. Theodore G. Tappert, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia; Dr. Warren A. Quanbeck, Lutheran Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; Dr. Wilhelm Pauck, Union Theological Seminary, New

York; Dr. Harold Grimm, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

From Sweden, Prof. Herbert Olsson, University of Uppsala; the Rev. Peter Fraenkel of Lund.

From Germany, Dean Robert Stupperich, University of Münster; Prof. Rudolf Hermann, Humboldt University, Berlin; Dr. Oscar Thulin, director of the Luther Hall, Wittenberg; Prof. Bernhard Lohse, University of Hamburg.

From eastern Europe, Prof. D. Bartel of Warsaw, Poland, and Prof. Jenő Solyom of Budapest, Hungary.

Other countries expected to be represented among the conference participants include the United Kingdom, Australia, France, India, Japan, and Argentina. Director Stewart W. Herman of the LWF Committee on Latin America said the scholar from Argentina would be Prof. Carlos Witthaus of the Lutheran Theological Faculty in Jose C. Paz.

Other Americans expected to attend include Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, president of Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill.; Dr. Walter Kukkonen and Dr. R. H. Fischer, both of Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary; Dr. Fred W. Meuser, Capital University, Columbus, Ohio; Dr. E. Clifford Nelson, Luther Seminary, St. Paul; and Dr. Arnold E. Carlson, Augustana Seminary, Rock Island; Dr. E. G. Schwiebert, Executive Director of the Foundation for Reformation Research, and Dr. Carl S. Meyer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Porto Alegre, Brazil. — Three younger churches—two African and one Asian—were admitted into membership in the Lutheran World Federation by action of its Executive Committee.

Approved by the committee at its annual meeting here, March 20—25, were the 22,000-member Lutheran Church of Central Tanganyika, the 28,000-member Usambara-Digo Lutheran Church in the same country,

and the 4,500-member Taiwan Lutheran Church on the island of Formosa.

Their acceptance brings the federation's roll of affiliated churches to 64 in 34 countries, representing a combined membership of nearly 50 million of the estimated 71 million Lutherans in the world.

The LWF's Executive Committee deferred action on the membership application of the 113,000-member Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church of Southwest Africa pending further steps by that church body toward full autonomy. An outgrowth of work by the Finnish Missionary Society, the Ovambokavango Church was formally organized in 1954, and at its first assembly in 1958 it voted to seek membership in the LWF.

Also approved by the committee was an application for official LWF recognition from a Lutheran congregation in La Paz, Bolivia—the 600-member German-speaking Evangelical Lutheran church. It was the ninth congregation—all in South America—accorded such status, which is granted to local Lutheran churches in countries where there is no federation-affiliated church body, to enable them to have a fuller tie with world Lutheranism.

The Church of Central Tanganyika is the fruit of labor by missionaries from the Augustana Lutheran Church. The church was officially constituted in 1958, and the Augustana mission organization is now being integrated into it.

The Usambara-Digo Church—like the already LWF-affiliated Lutheran Church of Northern Tanganyika—is located on a mission field in that country originally developed by Germans but now administered under a federation trusteeship by the National Lutheran Council of the United States, with an international staff. Lutherans of other countries took over the work when conditions during and after World War II made

it impossible for the Germans to continue it.

All three African churches are currently headed by foreign missionaries: Ovambokavango by a Finn, the Rev. Alpo Hukka, Usambara-Digo by a German, the Rev. Heinrich Waltenberg of the Bethel Mission, and Central Tanganyika by an American, the Rev. Ruben A. Pedersen. All three, however, are free to choose an African, and one or two will probably do so within a few years.

President of the Taiwan Church is a national, the Rev. Peter Chou. This church was developed after the war by the Taiwan Lutheran Mission, a unified agency representing three North American and three Norwegian agencies as well as a Danish and a Finnish mission agency. Formal organization of the church took place in 1954.

Most of the Lutherans on Taiwan are Chinese who fled from the mainland when the Communists conquered the country. Present constituents of the united mission that was developed there in the early 1950s include the missionary groups from the Evangelical Lutheran, Augustana Lutheran, and Lutheran Free Churches of North America.

European mission agencies represented are that of the Norwegian Lutheran Free Church, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, and the Norwegian, Danish, and Finnish missionary societies.

The La Paz congregation is the first Bolivian group to be recognized by the LWF. Of the congregations previously granted such status, four are in Venezuela, two in Colombia, and one each in Ecuador and Peru.

The La Paz congregation traces its origin to German Lutheran services started in the Bolivian capital in 1923, although it has had a full-time pastor and a parish council only since 1949. In the 1930s and '40s it was served by pastors from Argentina and Chile, who made periodical visits.