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John Theodore Mueller
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

RUDOLF BULTMANN'S CONCEPT OF REVELATION

Under this heading the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (July 1962) presents what seems to us a keen and correct analysis of Bultmann's doctrine of revelation. In his criticism of Bultmann's teaching Father Cahill writes *inter alia*: "What appears as the primary problem posed by Bultmann's concept of a Word encountering man and offering him the actual possibility of a new 'existential' self-understanding is that Christ, his cross and resurrection seem thereby to become only a symbol. Though Bultmann does not deny the historical reality of Christ's life and death (the resurrection is quite another matter), divine significance is achieved only through man's acceptance of the preached Word. At best, events of the past are linked with the present preached Word in a very heterogeneous external alliance. . . . The object of faith for Bultmann is a challenging, demanding Word proclaiming birth, death, and resurrection. This birth, death, and resurrection is not a series of historical events which have a reality independent of man's inner acceptance. Rather, inner acceptance constitutes Eschatological Occurrence [the revelation of God]. What constitutes the birth of Christ? The new life of man. What constitutes the cross of Christ? Man's actual death to the standards of this world. What constitutes the resurrection? Man's resurrection from his unauthentic existence. . . . That Christ's life, death, and resurrection are reduced to symbols . . . becomes clearer when we turn to the resurrection which, in Bultmann's system, is not a real theological and historical event, but simply a projection of the Christian community to interpret the cross . . . a preached resurrection symbolizes the resurrection demanded of man. . . . What then does Bult-

mann actually do when he reduces the Christian fact to a mere inner acceptance of the kerygma . . . ? He performs toward Christ an inner movement of an essentially mythical character, transforming into terms, which are outwardly Christian, a spiritual attitude which is more Hindu and archaic than Christian. He makes the inner presence of the Christian message in human consciousness a substitute for the objective love of God for man in Christ. . . . It is all a Christianized myth." The whole article deserves careful reading, but the few quoted statements stress the salient characteristics of Bultmann's basic aberration from the Christian truth. JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

Under this heading H. H. Rowley, emeritus professor of Hebrew, University of Manchester, England, gives in *Interpretation* (July 1962) his verdict on the Qumran scrolls. After a careful examination of the scrolls he sums up his findings as follows (quoted in part): "All in all, therefore, the debt of the church to Qumran was not a great one. To say this is not in any way to depreciate the Qumran sect. . . . But all the links between the sect and the church that can survive examination are superficial and not fundamental, and in particular the theology of the sect is poles asunder from Christian theology. In its teaching there is nothing comparable with the place of Jesus in Christian thought. It has been supposed that the Teacher of Righteousness was crucified and that he was expected to rise again as the Messiah. The crucifixion of the Teacher is nowhere mentioned in any of the scrolls. There is a reference to the 'lion of wrath' who crucified men, and it is assumed that this means the crucifixion of eight hundred Pharisees by Alexander Jan-

naeus. By a curious stretch of imagination it is then assumed without the slightest evidence that Janneaus went to Qumran and crucified the Teacher of Righteousness. Of the expected resurrection of the Teacher there is once more no clear evidence, though more than half a century ago it was claimed that an obscure text in the Zadokite Work expressed this expectation. . . . In the New Testament the crucifixion of Jesus does not have to be imaginatively created by a twentieth-century author, and his resurrection is not something that is referred to in a single obscure text. . . . In all the discussion of the scrolls there has been too much reading of the New Testament into the Qumran texts, thus creating an illusory similarity where none appears, while at the same time eyes have been closed to patent differences. A more objective study of the scrolls and the New Testament . . . recognizes the gulf that separates the thought and practice of the New Testament church from that of Qumran." JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

Vienna.—A non-Lutheran stewardship expert told a Lutheran World Federation commission here that the churches of northern Europe were failing to make the best use of the resources at their disposal. For this reason, "it seems by no means certain that there will be a Christian renewal in northern Europe in our time," said Dr. T. K. Thompson of New York, a staff officer of the National Council of the Churches of Christ.

Dr. Thompson, director of the NCCC Department of Stewardship and Benevolence, is completing a nine-month department-assigned study of the European churches' stewardship attitudes and theology, as well as their financial practices.

He expressed to the LWF Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life on

June 12 the opinion that "the opportunities for Christian renewal in the Evangelical churches are greater in northern Europe than anywhere else in the world. The resources are tremendous—economic prosperity, a great theological tradition, a favorable attitude on the part of the state, a nearby threat from atheist Communism, and a fundamentally religious people," the 47-year-old Congregationalist minister said.

Nevertheless, "the dominating cultural and economic pattern seems to be the quest for creature comforts. In the modern welfare state, the means of life have become the goals."

The NCCC official advocated "an active program of stewardship and evangelism" to overcome the weakness in congregational life which he saw in the Lutheran churches of northern Europe. He cited four evidences of such weakness:

The gap between the proportion of the population that is baptized, confirmed, married and buried by the church and that which regularly attends congregational worship.

The tax system of church support, by which "the citizen gets as much as he wants from the church, and for little cost—he is satisfied to have the church there when he needs it, like the fire department."

"The congregation as the Christian community where ethical ideals are shared, disciplines enforced, and wayward people helped seems to have disappeared."

An "easy-going and condescending" anti-clericalism by which "the pastor is often thought of as an educated museum-keeper, learned but not expected to contribute much to present-day problems."

Dr. Thompson contended that "many persons and organizations (in the north European churches) do not want a renewal of the congregation, at least in its present form." Among them he named:

Pastors who, not being dependent on their congregations for support, "are satisfied with their present situation," which calls for reading, preaching, performing ministerial acts, visiting the sick and bereaved, but otherwise no personal attention to their parishioners.

Mission society executives who "see their position threatened" and "are by no means willing to join a stewardship movement which would put some 'super-church' organization between them and their constituents."

Government officials who "take pride in the fact that some portion of the tax monies go to support the church" and take "a sort of whimsical delight" in exercising "some element of control" over it.

Lay academy leaders, whose movement "must be regarded as partly a protest against clerical domination of the formal church."

Leaders of various kinds of religious groups, such as mission societies, prayer groups, and fund-raising efforts, which "are reluctant to surrender any of their organizational strength or functions to a more dynamic central church."

Lay people who, remembering "the spectre of the Roman Catholic Church with its inquisitions and pretensions to all temporal and spiritual power, . . . would rather see a disorganized church with a multiplicity of church and religious groups than a well-organized church with an integrated system of missions and benevolences."

Detroit, Mich.—Lutheran church bodies of America were invited here to participate in a joint study of the theology of confirmation, including a revolutionary proposal that baptized children be admitted to holy communion before they are confirmed.

By action of delegates to the constituting convention of the Lutheran Church in America in Cobo Hall, the American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will be asked to appoint members to a Joint Commission on the Theology and Practice of Confirmation. As a basic document, the special commission will have a 3,000-word report on the subject which was submitted to the LCA by its own Joint Commission on Confirmation.

The commission was discharged "with thanks for its provocative report" and the report will be transmitted "as information" to the new commission if the ALC and Missouri Synod accept the LCA's invitation.

Specifically, the LCA's commission sug-

gested "for the purpose of stimulating discussion" that children be permitted to receive communion at the age of ten years. The commission further proposed that confirmation should no longer be regarded as necessary for admission to holy communion, a radical departure from the present Lutheran requirement that members must be confirmed before receiving the Lord's Supper.

The commission also urged that the age for confirmation be raised to the completion of grade eleven, the equivalent of the junior year in high school. This would mean that children would be confirmed at from 14 to 16 years rather than from 12 to 14. The most common practice in Lutheran churches is to confirm at the end of grade eight or nine after a two-year course of catechetical instruction.

In its 3,000-word report, the commission pointed out that the practice of the Christian church concerning holy communion has been varied. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, the sacrament is given to children and even to infants. Roman Catholic practice since the 12th century has been to allow all to come to the Lord's Table who have reached the "age of reason," now defined as age seven. In both of these churches, the commission stressed, confirmation has no connection with admission to communion, and this, it added, "appears also to have been the case in early Reformation orders which provided for confirmation."

The commission spoke out sharply in criticism of the popular understanding by which confirmation has come to occupy a place "which is, in fact, above both sacraments"—Baptism and Communion, the two sacraments recognized by Lutheran churches. Observing that "Baptism is a sacrament; confirmation is not," the commission declared that "it rests upon no command of our Lord and cannot be established as essential to the Christian life on the basis of Scripture, the

Lutheran confessions, or the evangelical understanding of the church and the means of grace."

Vienna.—Manuscript work on the main study book for the Lutheran World Federation's 1963 Assembly in Helsinki was completed here by the LWF Commission on Theology.

The document is a thorough, many-sided treatment of the assembly theme: the central Lutheran doctrine of justification of man before God by faith in Christ and its renewing effect on human life. Its publication and distribution to federation member churches is scheduled for early next year.

Under the motto "Christ Today," the assembly is to be held in the Finnish capital from July 30 to Aug. 11, 1963. The study book will seek to make the justification doctrine understandable in terms of present everyday life.

Its text is being prepared by Dr. Warren A. Quanbeck, professor of systematic theology at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., and a member of the Commission on Theology. It digests lectures and discussions on the subject which the commission has been holding for the past several years, as well as contributions that have appeared in the LWF quarterly *Lutheran World*.

Previous lectures have dealt with the justification doctrine exegetically, historically, and systematically. As a final aspect of the treatment, the commission, at its eight-day meeting here which ended on June 18, considered the doctrine from the viewpoint of the preaching of the Gospel in the modern world. Lectures on this aspect were given here by Professors W. Dantine of Vienna and Jacob Kumaresan of Madras, India.

Besides the theme study book, the commission worked on plans for several other Helsinki Assembly publications for which it is responsible. Prominent among them was a guide for study of St. Paul's Epistle to the

Ephesians, which is the Biblical book selected for special attention at the assembly.

The Bible study guide, including a polyglot text of the epistle itself, is expected to be ready for the churches' use late this year. It is being prepared by another commission member, Dr. Nils A. Dahl, New Testament professor at the University of Oslo.

Further assembly publications that received attention here included works dealing with

—ways in which the historic Lutheran confessional documents are invoked as an authority in the churches' life today;

—Lutheran views and practices respecting inter-church fellowship and particularly intercommunion;

—the nature and purpose of the federation as a global association of churches united in a common body of beliefs;

—prayer and the devotional life of congregations, families, and individual Christians.

In these areas, the commission has been fostering theological studies since the 1957 LWF Assembly at Minneapolis. The latter two are slated for publication next April, and the former two the following July, just before the assembly.

Presiding at the sessions here was the commission chairman, Dr. Ernst Kinder, theological professor at the University of Münster in West Germany.

Other attending members, besides Professors Quanbeck and Kumaresan, were Dr. Peter Brunner of the University of Heidelberg in West Germany and Dr. Taito Kantonen of Hama Divinity School, Springfield, Ohio. Both are professors of systematic theology at their respective institutions.

Washington, D. C.—Lutherans are taking an unprecedented peacetime interest in their men and women in military service.

The Rev. E. O. Midboe, executive secretary of the National Lutheran Council's Bureau of Service to Military Personnel,

said that indications from many fronts point to new highs in interest by individual ministers and by congregations in maintaining Christian fellowship with their members in service. He termed the increased participation by Lutheran ministers in chaplain programs as particularly significant.

Civilian Lutheran ministers (contact pastors) who carry additional responsibilities for military installations near their churches are also increasing, Mr. Midboe said. There are 330 contact pastors in the U. S. now and expansion of this group is being planned for selected overseas areas.

Mr. Midboe said several factors are behind the current high interest which Lutherans are showing in their fellow members in the armed forces. Among them are the Berlin crisis and the trouble in Laos, concern shown by the evangelism commissions of NLC participating church bodies as evidenced by their promotion of more efficient referral systems to keep in touch with military personnel and the continued cooperation of responsible church committees.

Vienna. — "The enormous development of telephone counseling, especially in Germany but also elsewhere in Europe and in the United States" has been a noteworthy feature of the churches' pastoral work in the past couple of years, a Lutheran World Federation commission heard here.

"At the first European conference on telephone counseling in 1960, it was stated that telephone counseling was then practiced at 41 places in ten different countries of Europe," the LWF Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life was told in mid-June.

"Since then, the number has considerably increased," added a report given by a commission member, Bishop Jens Leer Andersen of Helsingör, Denmark.

Some 140 persons engaged in this kind of ministry are expected to attend the second European conference at the Bad Boll Evan-

gelical Academy, near Stuttgart, Germany, on Sept. 17—21. Eighty participated in the 1960 meeting, which was held at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, near Geneva, Switzerland.

In addition, an Evangelical Conference for Telephone Ministry (*Telefonseelsorge*) was organized at Düsseldorf, Germany, last December, reported Bishop Leer Andersen.

Such counseling services are now provided in 12 German cities by 300 voluntary staff members and plans are under way for their introduction in several other localities, he said. In Sweden, a telephone ministry is offered in a number of cities and towns, in Denmark at two provincial centers as well as Copenhagen, in Norway and Finland at their national capitals.

In Stockholm, the distressed person calls the same number as for fire, police, and other emergency calls. In Oslo the number is different but it is listed in the directory along with the other calls for emergency use, the churchman said.

During the autumn and winter peak season, as many as two out of every 100,000 West Germans seek pastoral advice through these services. At Hamburg, where one of the oldest telephone counseling centers functions, the calls have averaged 20 a day—about 7,000 a year—during the past three years. In Berlin, each of the eight phone exchanges handles about 25 calls daily.

"From the United States it is reported that the four telephone counseling centers in New York have 20,000 calls annually," Bishop Leer Andersen said. "In Los Angeles there are 10,000 and in San Francisco 3,500."

Other countries having such services include France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Turkey, Israel, Pakistan, and Japan.

The popularity of this ministry has been attributed largely to a desire of many Protestants to initiate anonymously a consultation on their personal problems, although face-

to-face pastor counseling often follows. In Stuttgart, Germany, two out of every five callers wish such a follow-up confrontation, the Danish bishop reported.

"Experience in all the European countries shows that the problems which most often cause the use of the telephone counseling service are loneliness and guilt," he said.

With respect to more specific categories of problems, reports from Germany revealed that every fourth distressed caller—in Berlin, every third—seeks help in marriage difficulties.

Counseling to would-be suicides is especially frequent in Berlin, which since the war has had the highest suicide rate in the world. During its first two years of operation, the *Telefonseelsorge* in Berlin reported having cared for about 1,000 persons weary of life or in danger of taking their lives. Ten percent had actually attempted suicide.

West Berlin's suicide rate in 1946 was six per 10,000, but since then it has been reduced to less than half that figure.

Since a wide range of problems are presented by callers, the telephone counselors include not only clergymen, but doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, social workers, and other professionals, all pledged to secrecy.

Bishop Leer Andersen said the flourishing of the new counseling method caused the question to be raised whether it was evidence that the Christian congregation had failed men in their need.

He asked also: "Can genuine care of souls be practiced at a distance? Is it possible to pray with another person on the telephone? Is it possible to give absolution?"

Bundaberg (Queensland), Australia.—The head of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia said here that his church would not consider withdrawing from the Lutheran World Federation for the sake of confessional unity in this country.

Unity discussions between the UELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia

are stalemated over the issue of whether such things as LWF membership constitute "sinful unionism."

"Nothing in the synodical sphere has caused the UELCA to change from the position to which it has adhered for a number of years," President-General Max Lohe told his church's 14th triennial synod, which met here on June 20—26.

Oxford, England.—New college facilities at Oxford University here, for which the Lutheran World Federation was the initial contributor, were opened on June 25 by Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

The facilities are student and staff residential extensions at Mansfield College, the 76-year-old Congregational institution where men are trained for the Lutheran ministry with financial assistance from the LWF Department of World Service.

The department, which supports a Lutheran tutor on the Mansfield staff, opened the college's 160,000 pounds (\$450,000) fund appeal with a contribution of 8,000 pounds (\$22,500) toward the new living quarters, which will benefit the theological training program.

Started in 1957, the tutorship arrangement was made at the request of the Lutheran Council of Great Britain, which recognized that the future existence of its affiliated churches depended on enlargement of the ministry in this country.

Present Lutheran tutor here is the Rev. Franklin E. Sherman, a clergyman of the United Lutheran Church in America who came from an assistant professorship in religion at the State University of Iowa.

In addition to teaching the little group of Lutheran theological students enrolled at Mansfield, the tutor offers lectures on Lutheran confessions and traditions for all the students of the college. He also serves as chaplain to all Lutheran students at Oxford, many of whom come from other countries.

Vienna.—Austrian Protestantism, which

once embraced nine-tenths of the population but was violently suppressed in the Counter-Reformation, now has a satisfactory legal status as a small minority in a Roman Catholic country, Lutheran World Federation commission and staff members heard here.

Leaders of the Evangelical Church in Austria told the Lutheran visitors from eight countries in mid-June that the national Law for Protestants passed last year has given their church and its members a more favorable position than at any time since the Reformation.

"Now a new chapter in the history of our church has begun," an Austrian Lutheran spokesman said. Reports on the history and present situation of Austrian Protestantism were given at concurrent Vienna meetings of two LWF commissions — one dealing with theology and the other with stewardship and congregational life.

New York. — Membership of the Lutheran churches in North America totaled 8,611,068 adults and children at the end of 1961.

The Lutheran bodies reported 8,333,797 baptized members in the United States and 277,271 members for their affiliated groups in Canada, according to the annual statistical summary issued here by the National Lutheran Council. The figures were compiled by Miss Helen M. Knubel, secretary of research and statistics in the Council's Division of Public Relations.

The total represents a gain of 154,205 members or 1.8 percent during 1961 — 145,508 in the U.S. and 8,697 in Canada. The percentage of increase was one-tenth of one percent above the 1960 gain, a level considerably below the average gain of 3.1 percent over the previous decade, when increases in membership ranged from 2.7 to 3.6 percent.

Comprising the third largest Protestant denominational grouping in America, the

Lutheran churches are exceeded in numbers only by the Baptists and Methodists.

The NLC's summary is based on statistics supplied by fifteen Lutheran church bodies, plus the Negro missions conducted by four groups associated in the Lutheran Synodical Conference. Ten of the bodies recorded advances in membership, three reported no change, and two suffered losses.

The six bodies that participate in the National Lutheran Council — United, American, Augustana, Lutheran Free, Suomi Synod, and American Evangelical — have 5,640,087 members, a gain of 73,155 over the previous year.

The Synodical Conference — consisting of the Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Synod, Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and Evangelical Lutheran Synod, with Negro missions — has 2,936,421 members or 72,280 more than in 1960.

Five independent bodies — National Evangelical, Church of the Lutheran Confession, Finnish Apostolic, Lutheran Brethren, and Eilsen Synod — total 34,560 members, a gain of 8,770. Virtually all of the increase was due to receipt of figures for the first time this year from the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

The gain in baptized membership of 154,205 in 1961, distributed among the 18,317 congregations, marks an average increase of 8.4 new members per local church, compared to the average of 12 for the previous decade.

Confirmed or adult membership advanced by 124,896 to a grand total of 5,682,685, a gain of 2.2 percent. This would indicate an average accession of 6.8 adult members per congregation in 1961, the same average as that of 1950 through 1959. In 1960 the adult gain per congregation dropped to 5.7 members.

For the 17th consecutive year, the highest numerical increase was made by The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod as it ac-

counted for 49 percent of all the new members reported. Among the major bodies it also showed for the fourth year in a row the greatest gain on a percentage basis.

The Missouri Synod added 75,508 baptized members or 3.1 percent to boost its total membership to 2,544,544. The synod at year's end was the largest Lutheran body in America and one of three with more than two million members each. The new Lutheran Church in America, however, assumed the leading numerical position in mid-1962 with a total of 3,239,371 members.

For 1961 the United Lutheran Church reported a net increase of 754 or 0.3 percent and now has 2,495,763 members. It was noted that this body has analyzed and sharply pared its membership rolls, accounting for the small increase.

Third largest of the bodies, the American Lutheran Church, which began operations in 1961 after a three-way merger, has 2,364,442 members, a gain of 57,662 or 2.5 percent over 1960. When the Lutheran Free Church, which gained 3,003 or 3.4 percent and now has 90,253 members, joins the ALC the total will be 2,454,695.

The greatest church-body percentage gain, regardless of size, was compiled by the National Evangelical Lutheran Church, with an increase of 473 members or 4.2 percent to 11,870. The NELC has taken steps expected to lead to merger with the Missouri Synod in 1963.

Second highest percentage was registered by the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, 741 or 3.6 percent to 21,113 members.

Far above the average also was the increase reported for the Negro missions sponsored by the Synodical Conference. The missions showed a gain of 410 members or 4.8 percent and now have 8,941 members.

Other gains were reported by Augustana Lutheran Church, 11,444 or 1.9 percent to 629,547; Suomi Synod, 685 or 1.9 percent

to 36,274; and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, 169 or 3.5 percent to 5,061.

No report for 1961 was received from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and its membership remained at 13,639. The first report from the Church of the Lutheran Confession showed 8,128 members.

The Eilsen Synod, with 1,500 members, and the Finnish Apostolic Church, with 8,001 members, were unchanged from the previous year. Both bodies reported no census has been taken by their denominations for several years.

Losses in membership were reported by the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, down 393 or 1.6 percent for a current total of 23,808 members, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, a loss of 4,379 or 1.3 percent to a total of 348,184.

Bangalore, India.—A commission representing five South Indian Lutheran churches and the Church of South India has taken significant new measures to bring them closer to organic union.

The inter-church commission in a three-day meeting here unanimously adopted a draft statement of faith and approved a litany which it recommended for immediate use in the churches. The body also received a preliminary draft of a common catechism which will receive further study and revision before being submitted to the churches.

The lengthy six-point statement of faith will be submitted to the governing bodies of the negotiating churches. If they approve, it will be incorporated into the constitution of the united church.

The commission also outlined several practical measures to be taken in the interim, including the setting up of a regional inter-church committee in each of the four language areas of South India to "take steps to promote mutual fellowship, understanding, and cooperation between the ministry and members" of the churches involved.

It further advocated joint evangelistic work, periodic united services, frequent interchange of pulpits, and cooperation to avoid duplication in pastoral and institutional work.

In an action dealing with "the shape of the church," the commission members recorded their convictions on two important points. These were: (1) that all ordained ministers of the uniting churches must be accepted as ministers of the merged church without any kind of further ordination; and (2) that provision must be made for receiving after union into the ministry of the united church, without further ordination, the ordained ministers of all the parent churches.

Joint chairmen of the meeting were Bishop H. Sumitra of the Church of South India, and Bishop R. B. Manikam of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church. Commission actions were taken on recommendations of committees set up at the commission's last meeting held in August 1961.

Actual drafting of a constitution will be begun by the next meeting of the commission, scheduled for Jan. 9—10, 1963, in Bangalore. In the meantime a study will be made of the constitutions of the churches involved. A statistical survey also will be made of their membership, programs, and

geographical situations, with a view to working out the administrative areas.

Representatives of the two groups have been holding discussions since 1948. Eight years were devoted to an examination of basic Christian doctrines with a view to seeing if there were any fundamental differences in dogma which would keep their churches apart.

At the conclusion of the eight years the representatives arrived at an agreement that no such fundamental differences existed and that the next step was to bring about closer fellowship, with the ultimate goal being the formation of a united church.

The Church of South India is itself a union of three churches, the Anglican, Methodist, and the South India United Church, which in turn was the result of a merger of Presbyterian, Congregational, and Dutch Reformed bodies.

The five Lutheran churches involved in the talks are the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church, the product of German and Swedish missionary work; the Arcot Lutheran Church, the product of Danish missionary activity; the South Andhra Lutheran Church and the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church, the product of U. S. mission boards' work; and the Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church, brought about by the activities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.