

# Concordia Theological Monthly



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# THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

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## THE CHURCH IN KOREA

Dr. E. G. Homrighausen last year spent a Sabbath leave of nearly five months in East and Southeast Asia, studying theological education on behalf of the Nanking Theological Seminary Foundation and the World Council of Christian Education. In *Theology Today* (January 1956) he represents firsthand reflections on some of the areas which he visited. There is much that is encouraging for Christians in his report, as the following lines from his description of South Korea indicate. He writes: "Church buildings seem to come into existence over night. People love the church; it is their home. Literally out of the rubble, out of 'nothing,' a church building is erected by the people themselves. The church provides for its widows and orphans. In Seoul a former brothel is now such a widows' home. Bible schools enroll thousands of children. . . . And many of the teachers are widows. The church provides chaplains for the army, navy, air force, and veterans rehabilitation centers. On top of an imposing hill stands the theological seminary with several hundred students on the very spot where once stood a Japanese Shinto shrine. 'Night seminaries' enroll nearly 3,000 students who are so eager to study that they come after working hours. Among the prisoners of war, 625 men volunteered for the ministry. About 500 ministers were martyred during the war. I spoke to a prayer meeting in Seoul one Wednesday evening, when over 1,500 were present. Five o'clock morning-prayer meetings and Communion services are usual. . . . The Korean church has faced the shrine issue and the Communist issue. There is no liberalism in the Korean church. What is the secret of this religious vigor? Korean Christianity has from the beginning been based on the Bible, and it has been deeply rooted in prayer." JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

## THE CHURCH AND THE SECTS

In *positions lubériennes* (January 1956) André Benoit offers a fine overview of ancient and modern sects, analyzes their common characteristics, and points out how the ancient church has reacted against them. In his opinion it is the peculiarity of the sects to emphasize falsely certain aspects of the Christian faith and so to mutilate the Christian message. In sectarian areas this happened in the past, and it still happens today. Against this truncation of the Christian message

by the sects the church organized itself, planted its members on the Word of God as set forth in Scripture, and put stress on the entire Christian message. The writer says in conclusion: "In considering the situation of the ancient church, we have tried to characterize the very essence of all sects. In studying the reaction of the ancient church against the sects, we have learned how we today might respond to the sectarian offensive. But let us note well that history does not offer us solutions which we may apply mechanically; but it points out to us the directives and gives us the elements of the solution which we may use to our advantage. What, then, are we to do in view of the sects? The answer really is very simple. It is a question of being faithful to the biblical message; it is a question of centering always anew and always much better the life of the church in Scripture, which is and remains its only norm. In that case, certainly, most sects will lose their reason to exist. Naturally, there will always remain people whose curiosity is insatiable and who will look for false consolations and false hopes outside Scripture. For such we can do nothing else than to ask the Lord to lead them back to the truth."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### THE "EVANGELICAL" CHURCHES IN ITALY AND THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

Under the heading *Die "evangelischen" Gemeinden und das lutherische Bekenntnis*, the Rev. Erich Dahlgruen, formerly Lutheran pastor in Rome, now pastor in Florence, and since 1948 "Dean of the Ev.-Luth. Church in Italy," in the *Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung* (February 1, 1956), replies to the question how the formerly good "United German-speaking congregations in the Diaspora [*die bisher gut unierte deutschsprachige Auslandsgemeinden*]" were led to discover their Lutheran soul." He first directs attention to the fact that the German congregations in Meran, Bozen, Venice, and Trieste had long since been known either as "Ev.-Luth. congregations" or as "churches of the Augsburg Confession." The other congregations in Italy, as those in Rome, Florence, Genoa-San Remo, and Naples-Sicily, were known as "Evangelical." This does not mean that these congregations were without a distinctive confession. In fact, the overwhelming majority of their members were definitely Evangelical-Lutheran as were those of the congregations mentioned above. But why, then, did the congregations not retain the general designation "Evangelical"? That designation might have been understood as though these congregations were the evangelical churches *par excellence* in Italy. Again, the designation "United church" there would be meaningless. Besides this, in Italy

the term "Lutheran Church" (*Chiesa Luterana*) has become officially known, as distinguished from the Anglican, Presbyterian, the Italian, and the French Free churches. In Rome, for example, the Lutheran Church is recognized as the only one in which the heritage of Martin Luther is preserved not only in its liturgical service but also in its use of Luther's Small Catechism. Finally, in this new period of confessionalism, in which the Lutheran and Reformed types of Protestantism reassert their peculiarities, it becomes a duty for Lutherans to present, over against Roman ceremonialism, the Lutheran forms both of doctrine and worship.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

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

*Jerusalem.*—Scholars of the Hebrew University here have succeeded in unrolling and partly deciphering the so-called Lamech scroll—the last of the seven Dead Sea scrolls. The scroll was acquired for the Israeli National "Shrine of the Book" Trust last year from Metropolitan Athanasius Yeshue Samuel of the Syrian Orthodox Monastery of St. Mark here.

The Dead Sea scrolls, the oldest known Biblical manuscripts, were discovered by Bedouin shepherds in 1947 in a Judean wilderness cave near the northwestern end of the Dead Sea. Four were sold to Metropolitan Athanasius and another member of the Syrian Jacobite community in Jerusalem. Their repurchase by Israel was made possible by the American Fund for Israel Institutions and the S. D. and R. H. Gottesman Foundation of New York.

Unrolling of the Lamech scroll was extremely difficult because of its decayed condition. Carried out under the supervision of Drs. Y. Yadin and N. Avigad, it yielded four complete pages, each with 34 lines of script. In addition, there were five partly preserved pages and several more with single sentences or words. The work of deciphering is continuing, but it is already clear that the scroll is an Aramaic version of parts of the Book of Genesis, interwoven with stories and legends about the lives of the patriarchs.

*New York.*—A Jewish scholar said here that the famous Dead Sea scrolls are "not of great antiquity" but were written in the Middle Ages by none too literate writers "and hence have no value for Judaism or early Christianity." Dr. Solomon Zeitlin, professor of rabbinic literature at Dropsie College, Philadelphia, made this statement in a lecture at the New York Public Library.

Most Biblical scholars agree that the scrolls were written between the first century before Christ and the first century of the Christian era.

Some scholars, however, are still reserving judgment until more is known of the manuscripts discovered by Bedouin shepherds in a cave near Jericho in 1947.

*Minneapolis, Minn.*—The *Pro Deo et Patria* Award of the Lutheran Church was conferred on 325 Boy Scouts or Explorers during the recent observance of Scout Week, it was announced here by the National Lutheran Committee on Scouting. Recipients of the honor were members of church troops in 188 communities of 35 states and represented eight church bodies, according to the report of the Rev. Gordon C. Bergin, chairman of the awards committee.

By synodical affiliation the award winners included 129 Scouts from the United Lutheran Church in America and 49 each from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Augustana Lutheran Church. Also, 44 each from the American Lutheran Church and Evangelical Lutheran Church, five from the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, three from the Suomi Synod, and one from the Lutheran Free Church, while one was nonsynodical.

The American Federation of Lutheran Brotherhoods, which sponsors the National Lutheran Committee on Scouting, established the *Pro Deo et Patria* Award in 1943. It consists of a citation and medal granted by the participating church bodies to Lutheran boys who are members of a registered Scout unit in recognition of "wholehearted participation in the total program of the church." In the past twelve years, 15,806 applications have been received and 3,275 awards have been granted: 1,267 in the ULCA, 670 in the ELC, 548 in Augustana, 369 in the Missouri Synod, 367 in the ALC, 20 in the LFC, 18 in the UELC, seven in the Suomi Synod, two in the AELC, and one in the Wisconsin Synod, while six were nonsynodical.

*Berlin, Germany.*—Lutheran churches in East Germany face a new crisis as Communist authorities step up their antichurch propaganda, continue to undercut the church's material basis, and strive to drive wedges between East and West German church leaders by threats against those in their zone and accusations against those in the West.

According to *Christ und Welt*, West German Protestant weekly, the increased distribution of atheistic propaganda material, cutting of financial support to churches, recently renewed arrests of church workers, and constantly increasing threats uttered by Communist leaders, amount to an antichurch campaign "even more radical" than experienced in 1953 prior to the June riots in East Germany. *Christ und Welt* declared that the Communist aim is to separate East German churches from their Evangelical sister churches in the West in order

to create an independent church led by a handful of men obedient to the Communist regime. Other newspapers, including the independent West Berlin daily *Der Tagesspiegel*, seem to concur in this analysis.

Stressing that neither Bishop Dibelius nor any one of the six regional bishops residing in the East Zone "would ever join a state church the top leaders of which would be Communistic atheists," the Christian weekly went on to warn that the Reds, nonetheless, have found support for their aims among members of the East Zone Evangelical churches.

This group within the church, *Christ und Welt* maintained, is led by Dean Heinrich Gruber, representative at the Pankow government of the Evangelical Church in Germany, but described by the weekly as "one who has been refuted and isolated by pastors and congregations of the zone."

While Communist officials again openly proclaim that "religion hinders progress," Dean Gruber echoes official warning that the church "must revise its stand" and urges official subordination of East German churches to the state, *Christ und Welt* charged.

*Oslo, Norway.* — Norwegian authorities have refused to recognize the Mormon congregation of Oslo as a free church entitled to perform marriages and keep church registers, the *Church News* of the northern countries reported. The government's opinion that the Mormons do not constitute a free church under Norway's Dissenter Act, regulating the activities of free churches, was based on a 1954 finding by the Bishops' Assembly of the (Lutheran) State Church proclaiming that the Mormon Church "could not be considered a Christian body." The Mormons' right freely to practice their religion in Norway was in no way affected by the decision, the *Church News* said.

*Cincinnati, Ohio.* — Dr. Carl H. Kraeling, director of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, said here that Christian scholars do not fear, as some writers have maintained, that discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls may weaken the foundations of Christian faith. He told the annual meeting of the National Council of Churches' Division of Christian Education that scholars regard the scrolls as an important discovery that "gives a clearer conception of the history of the Old Testament text and a clearer picture of the total situation in which the Gospel was born." Dr. Kraeling said the scrolls "amplify current knowledge of Jewish piety, religious thought and observance in Palestine."

"They show," he said, "the devotion of most deeply pious groups and individuals to the religious heritage of Israel's past, the intensive efforts made to formulate the chief elements of that heritage, and the intensity of the belief that God would in the immediate future fulfill His promises to His people and establish His sovereignty on earth through agents of His choosing."

The scrolls indicate, the Chicago scholar said, that both Jesus and John the Baptist may have been in personal contact with the Essene sect at some time. Dr. Kraeling said scholars are sure that Jesus was "not just another Essene and Christianity is not just a variant of the Essene movement, as some authorities first speculated." He warned that scholars cannot afford to ignore the facts brought to light in the scrolls, particularly as they affect understanding of the beginnings of Christianity and interpretation of the New Testament.

*Raleigh, N. C.*—A proposal that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Raleigh be allowed to operate a 300-bed hospital to be built here with tax funds brought protests from Protestant groups. Resolutions opposing the move were adopted by the Religious Liberty Committee of the Raleigh Baptist Association, the Presbyterian Council of Raleigh, the Harnett County Ministerial Association, the Little River Baptist Association, and others. They all contended that such a step would violate the principle of the separation of church and state.

Bishop Vincent S. Waters of the Raleigh Diocese recently offered to donate a site for the new \$5,000,000 hospital if the county would allow a Catholic order of sisters to staff and operate it. The Wake County Commissioners have appointed a committee to look into the proposal, including its legal aspects. Last December citizens of the county approved a \$5,000,000 bond issue to finance the project, along with a special tax levy for its operations.

The Religious Liberty Committee of the Raleigh Baptist Association said that any sectarian group involved in such a project should assume responsibility for it. It noted that North Carolina Baptists in recent years turned down an offer by the Federal Government of an initial gift of \$750,000 for the construction of an addition to the Baptist Hospital at Winston-Salem because they believed there should be no public support of sectarian enterprises. The group added it was of the opinion that the voters of Raleigh and Wake County would have rejected the hospital bond issue if they had known the institution might be placed under any sectarian control.

*New York.*—The Appellate Division here overruled an action of the New York County Supreme Court granting a writ of habeas

corpus which would have restored to Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hahn of Mount Vernon, N. Y., custody of their six-months-old daughter so that they could raise her as a Roman Catholic. The child, Dorothy, is living in Westport, Conn., with Larry Haines, TV-radio actor, and his wife Gertrude, to whom Mrs. Hahn signed over the baby before its birth last September. The Haines are Jewish; Mrs. Hahn is a Roman Catholic; and her husband, an Episcopalian, is taking instruction in the Roman Catholic faith.

*Chicago.*—Representatives of three Lutheran denominations planning to merge in 1960 as The American Lutheran Church approved Minneapolis as its headquarters city. The action was taken at a meeting here of the Joint Union Committee of the merging bodies—the American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church.

*Newark, N. J.*—George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, said here that the papal encyclicals have guided the American labor movement through the years. He mentioned especially *Rerum novarum*, the labor encyclical of Pope Leo XIII.

The labor leader addressed the 16th annual dinner here of the Spur Society of the School of Business Administration of St. Peter's College, Jersey City. During the dinner he was presented with the college's *Rerum novarum* award. The award is given each year to a Catholic who has "distinguished himself in the field of labor-management relations by fidelity to the principles of the social encyclical."

*Boston.*—Mixed marriages were condemned here by Roman Catholic family life experts as "a threat to the faith of the Catholic spouse and the religious training of the children."

A resolution adopted by the 24th annual convention of the National Catholic Conference on Family Life noted that between a third and a fourth of all valid marriages involving Catholics are mixed unions. This relatively high rate, the Conference said, poses a "particularly acute" problem in modern society "as the gap between Catholic family values and those maintained by other groups tends to widen."

The delegates said parents are obliged to instruct their children concerning the dangers of mixed marriage. Parents also were called upon to "guide and supervise the associations of their children so that they become acquainted with Catholic friends."