

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

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Editorial

Helsinki – After One Year

Jesus Christ: Conservative and Liberal  
ERWIN L. LUEKER

The Process of Americanization

Homiletics

Theological Observer

Book Review

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# Editorial ✠

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## THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

MOST PASTORS AND PROFESSORS accept major assignments in the conviction that the final deadline will never arrive. So it was with the new editor of this journal. But now the July issue stares balefully at us, and the printer is beckoning frantically. We have wanted to say some things to our readers and about our readers, and this editorial page, which we hope will become a more or less regular feature, is the best place.

The spirit of distinguished former editors fills the office. There was Francis Pieper, who served as editor in chief of *Lehre und Wehre*, one of the predecessors of this journal, and whose pungent editorial comments helped create a theological climate in which a free and thoroughly soteriological emphasis upon Law and Gospel dominated. There was William Arndt, coeditor of the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY from 1930 to 1938 and managing editor from 1938 to 1949, whose Biblical scholarship gained for him an international reputation. The unassuming way in which he taught and wrote blinded many of his students to the real Lutheran theological principles which he was seeking to preserve in a church body which was threatened by fundamentalism and separatism. Then came Frederick E. Mayer, 1949 to 1954, whose twin concerns with Law and Gospel and the proper understanding of the church helped the Synod appreciate old truths and also blazed some new trails which The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has since followed with real fruitfulness. He was followed by Walter R. Roehrs, 1954 to 1964, whose sure instinct for clear expression and theological sobriety left a deep impress upon this journal.

The present editor has no delusions about filling such shoes. The staff of the journal and the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from which the staff is chosen, and which is finally responsible for its contents, give him the courage to accept the work. These men are the real backbone of this journal. Its strengths and insights are their contributions. Tribute should also be paid to the authors who labor over their manuscripts with no thought of reward. These are the men who deserve public credit and thanks at this changing of the guard.

H. T. M.

## THE MEN OF MISSOURI

THE EDITOR OF ANY PERIODICAL should have a fairly clear picture of his target, his audience. It does no good to go elephant hunting with a BB gun. In the case of this journal the makeup of the audience underwent a major change recently when The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod decided to send it gratis to its 6,500 pastors. Approximately three fourths of our readers, then, are Missouri Synod clergymen, most of whom serve in local parishes, although 2,000 of them are engaged in more specialized ministries. Some 1,000 copies are mailed to libraries throughout the world each month, and another 1,300 copies go to the studies of pastors and theologians of almost every denomination in almost every part of the world. This constitutes a varied and very chal-

lenging audience. The editor and the staff accept the challenge with the hope that each reader will find enough helpful articles in the course of a year to make him a regular reader.

It is not enough to say that Missouri Synod pastors make up two thirds of our audience. We should have a fairly clear idea of who these men of Missouri are as well as a reasonably clear picture of the rest of our audience. It is impossible to arrange for a group portrait of 6,500 active pastors. So we must settle for a sketch, and the artist must remain responsible for what appears on his canvas.

Who are these "men of Missouri"? We suspect that the great majority of them will look very much alike in the artist's interpretation. This is due basically to the fact that almost all are graduates of only two theological seminaries located slightly more than 100 miles apart. This has produced a basic unity which at times can approach an almost monolithic agreement, the envy of every other denomination in the world. Yet it is not without attendant minor problems. Even two seminaries so close together geographically and confessionally have distinct personalities. Sometimes the alumni like to label their own school, or more enjoyably the other school, as good or bad, conservative or liberal, stimulating or deadening. This is good clean sport unless it should reach the serious name-calling stage which affects the attitude of the man in the pew.

Most of these men are so deeply involved in ministerial activity that they find it impossible to keep up with their studies and reading. This state of affairs is by no means peculiar to the Missouri Synod, and yet we would be bold enough to suggest that this could prove to be the Achilles' heel. To compensate for their lack of time for real study, they like to read condensed articles on current subjects. They often find themselves willing to take someone else's word on a given issue. "No, I haven't read Prof. Biffeld's article on justification, but I read a review of it by Mr. Jones, and he really ripped it to shreds. I hope we can get that man straightened out in a hurry."

These last two sentences give a false impression. It is our considered opinion — an opinion which our colleagues confirm as they travel to many Districts and pastoral groups to read essays — that the vast majority of our men are sound and well balanced. Statistics fail us here, but we would suggest that the proportion of convinced and vocal extremists on either wing amounts to less than 2 percent of the total membership. We doubt if any other church body can match this ratio of moderation to extremism in its clergy. The members of this vast middle group ordinarily remain quiet and busy in their parishes. They find far too much genuine work to do to rush into print at the drop of a "new" theological expression. But when they are forced to express themselves, they reveal the broad basis of moderate conservatism which is their essential mark. They did this most recently when they had to vote for new officials at the Cleveland convention in 1962. This powerful middle group elected moderate and responsible leaders for every position despite the dire predictions of the agitators to the right of us and to the left of us.

It is good to note that these men of Missouri are not totally immune to those who cry wolf. There are bound to be wolves in any group, and we must remain concerned

about looking under every sheepskin to see what really lurks there. Both those who decry the liberal trend and those who thunder against fundamentalistic trends find followers. Others who have not committed themselves to either view are nevertheless puzzled and concerned. They are curious about "what is going on at the seminaries" and about what the boards of Synod "plan to do next." They love their people, sometimes not wisely but too well, and so they try to shield them from much of the fruitful (and unfruitful) Biblical, theological, and ecumenical discussion which is at the center of world Christian life today. Very few of them believe they can make time stand still or even turn the clock back. They are willing to experience change and growth as long as the direction is unmistakably Biblical and confessional.

This journal feels a deep responsibility to this primary target. We shall endeavor to continue to keep you up to date on important theological developments in your own church body and in world Christianity. We shall not hesitate to explore new and promising fields of study even though the final answers may not be at all apparent. This, we feel, is a basic responsibility of any journal which calls itself a theological one. We shall continue to reaffirm traditional positions, but we shall not hesitate to reexamine them to reorient them when necessary in the hope that they will become even more relevant to you as you carry out your ministries in a complex and rapidly changing world.

For our 2,300 other readers we also feel a deep responsibility and affection (not just because most of you are paying subscribers). We shall try to discharge this responsibility by presenting the best possible face of genuine Lutheranism, with particular emphasis upon that heritage which is commonly labeled "Missourian." We cherish the hope that this may help you understand Lutheranism better and at the same time make a significant contribution toward a broader base of ecumenical conversation.

H. T. M.

### *EXPANDED ISSUES*

AT THE REQUEST of the Commission on Church Literature of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, W. Harry Krieger, chairman, the staff of this journal will undertake the publication from time to time of special issues built around a unifying theme. The first of these will appear in October and will emphasize some aspects of current Old Testament studies and their relationship to the parish pastor. This issue will consist of 96 pages. To make this large issue possible without additional cost to subscribers, the July and August issues are appearing as a single 64-page issue. Sermonic studies in this issue will include the fourth Sunday in September. The staff will welcome readers' reactions to this arrangement after they have read the October Old Testament issue.