

THE SPRINGFIELDER is published quarterly by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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Address communications to the Editor, Erich H. Heintzen, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Business correspondence should be addressed to Norman A. Bumby, Business Manager, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Unrest In Synod

ANYONE who has not lived his recent Synodical life in a trunk is aware of the current unrest in Synod regarding inspiration, revelation, and the doctrine of the Word generally.

There are those who, by implication at least, raise the King James Version to a position of esteem which is untenable. Others desire to ignore the problem of canon and the historically Lutheran distinction between *antilegomena* and *homologoumena*. Some espouse a doctrine of revelation which is identical with that taught in a doctrinal formulation of another decade which claimed that the Scriptures contain the Word of God. Other views expressed are patently neo-orthodox and would ultimately denude the Scriptures of the miraculous. Luther, who never developed a *locus* on the Scriptures, is quoted as a champion by any and all who would write or speak on the subject.

The seriousness of this unrest—we hesitate to use the word controversy—must not be minimized. The foundation of the Christian faith is involved. The basis for authority in faith and life is at stake.

In our opinion, a part of the difficulty arises from the fact that we are living on "borrowed theological capital" in the Missouri Synod. To paraphrase Goethe, we have never really apprehended the theological heritage of our fathers.

A number of ameliorating suggestions have been made by those who recognize that the present unrest is real and not apparent.

We would suggest that our smaller pastoral conferences eschew for a time the discussions of "practical" subjects and the hearing of reports from officialdom. We would further suggest that this conference time be given to a thorough study of the doctrine of the Word and that this study be so designed that the intelligent participation of all the brethren in the conference be secured. We would also caution against the use of "canned materials" as a basis for this proposed study. Guidelines prepared by joint-faculty committees are not the solution. Only intensive study by the brethren themselves will enable them to heed the counsel:

"Was du ererbt von deinen Vaetern hast,
Erwirb es um es zu besitzen"

G. J. B.

Are We Communicating?

A YOUTH survey, conducted by Lutheran Youth Research and sponsored by the church bodies of the National Lutheran Council as well as by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, has received considerable publicity in the public press.

One of the press releases stated that three-fourths of the youth involved in the survey "believe that they are justified before God by trying to live a good life rather than by faith."

The results of the survey do not surprise us. They indicate clearly the difficulty with which natural religion is replaced in the human heart by the religion of the Cross.

The results also reveal the ineffectiveness of much of that which we term "religious instruction." The survey should force us to question whether or not the memorization of Bible passages torn from their context and the rote learning of theological propositions are effectively transmitting "the faith once delivered to the saints."

If three-fourths of our youth display the spiritual illiteracy indicated by the survey, traditional confirmation instruction requires re-evaluation. Is that stage in life generally reserved for such instruction psychologically and educationally suitable? Is confirmation instruction primarily an intellectual exercise or primarily a spiritual experience?

We claim that Christian education is an "on-going process." To what extent is our public worship service with its preaching and liturgy contributing to growth in knowledge, truth, and grace?

In other words, if the results of the survey can be accepted (and on the basis of our twenty years' experience in teaching teenagers, we believe that they can), are we effectively communicating the Gospel?

G. J. B.

Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560)

Reformer, humanist . . . and human

THE quadricentennial of the death of Melanchthon (April 19) brings into sharper focus the delicate profile of this great and tragic Reformer and Confessor. In August of this year some hundred Luther experts will meet in Muenster to observe the anniversary of the final deliverance of this brilliant, irenic, timid, wavering soul from his great dread, the "*rabies theologorum*,"—the "fury" which, however, Philip himself had largely kindled.

Melanchthon's contributions to the Reformation, while he was Luther's colaborer and close friend, are inestimable, his *Augustana* and *Apology* constituting the primary Confessions. However, the farther he drifted from his moorings, the less estimable are his reforming efforts.

Melanchthon, nephew of the celebrated Reuchlin (*De Rudimentis Hebraeicis*), was by training and inclination first of all a humanist. Therein lay both his strength and weakness: on the one hand, facility with the languages, rhetoric, dialectics; on the other, a dangerous deference to the human mind in matters of doctrine. Melanchthon was also very human, often choosing the path of concession over confession, as in the *Loci communes* (1535), the *Variata* (1540), and the *Leipzig Interim* (1548).

Some harsh things have been said about Philip, not only by so-called "Gnesio-Lutherans" but by others, including Calvin. On the other hand, extenuating circumstances have been adduced. Nevertheless, a man's accomplishments must, finally, be evaluated not on the basis of his intentions and motives but by what he actually effects. And the seeds which Philip sowed did ripen into the bitter fruit of dissension and division among the Lutherans.

For a recent interpretation of Philip the reader may refer to Clyde Leonard Manschreck's *Philip Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* (1958); also to Franz Hildebrandt's *Melanchthon: Alien or Ally* (1946), a more technical monograph. And, while we are about it, why not review the *Confessions*?

Among us perhaps Melanchthon is remembered chiefly as the man who "changed the *Augsburg Confession*." But it is well to recall at this time that he also wrote it. E. H. H.