

# THE SPRINGFIELDER

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## In This Issue

THE major articles in this issue deal with several aspects of "mission," the primary, indeed, single enterprise of the Church.

Professor Otto Hintze's essay touches on the foreign field. His method is to let the voices of the missionaries come through loud and clear to us at home; a kind of direct "hot line" which is sure to prove informative and provocative.

Professor Gerhard Aho's presentation on the theology of evangelism focuses on that "divine madness" which is to evangelism "what gas is to a car and what wind is to a sailboat." *Schwaermerei?* Better read it first.

Dr. Henry Eggold tackles the complex and clamoring issue of the church and ministry in Christian social action. The tight outline form is ready-made for discussion purposes; perhaps a godsend for some sagging pastoral conference program.

Editorials and quite a number of the books reviewed bear directly or indirectly on the subject of mission or evangelism.

Please note this issue also contains a complete Index of Vol. 28-30 (1964/65-1966/67). We are indebted to Professor Barbara Whalen, Assistant Librarian, for the preparation of this useful tool for the benefit of our readers.

E. H. H.

# Editorial

## *New York Post Festum*

**N**EW YORK IS HISTORY. Generally speaking it was a good convention. We have attended more exciting ones, but none that we felt that was more truly representative of the real spirit of Missouri. Missouri moves, but she moves at her own rate and in her own way.

The physical arrangements were excellent, with everything under one roof. Aside from long lines at elevators we have nothing but praise for the Hilton Hotel and the arrangements which our Atlantic District brethren handled so expertly. The attendance at the Convention was probably an all time high. We were informed that only one pastoral delegate and only three lay delegates were absent.

In the area of education, the fine attitude of the delegates toward faculty salaries was most heartening. We hope and pray that this will be reflected in an equally fine attitude on the part of contributors. The decision to close Austin High School marks what probably will be the beginning of an era. The synodical high school has very likely had its day. The decision to delay action on the campus at Irvine was painful, and yet in view of the ambivalent position of Oakland and the financial situation, one cannot condemn the Convention for this action. We were happy to see the fine resolutions regarding Selma, both as to upgrading the school and recruitment of students for it. We were particularly happy at the decision of the Convention to give students at Fort Wayne "free and unrestricted choice for either St. Louis or Springfield."

In the area of missions, aside from giving our mission fields greater autonomy in their interchurch relationships, not a great deal was done because of the financial pinch. We hope that Missouri during the next biennium will regain her position as a truly mission-minded church, but it is going to cost money, and one could almost paraphrase Romans 10 by saying: "How shall they be sent unless they be paid?" The Mission Affirmations were reasserted with some interpretation. We have deplored some of the misuse of these affirmations both ecclesiastically and theologically. We hope that the air will be cleared.

In the area of theology the Synod was as clear as any convention in recent history. The close scrutiny which was given to various documents of the Commission on Theology showed both understanding and doctrinal concern. We certainly hope that the CTCR will heed the actions of the Synod on these points. The thunderous vote on the matter of creation and Genesis was heartening to those of us who feel that the Bible ought to be truly an authority in *all* matters of faith and life. The decision to put women on Boards of synod was a wise one in our opinion. The vote on

doctrinal review (censorship) shows both the doctrinal concern of synod as well as the sense of responsibility which synod has a right to expect of its editors and writers. Strange to say, the question of prayers for the dead, which we thought was long since settled, is still with us, but we are happy to see that the Convention voted strongly and resolutely on this matter. We were pleased with the vote on doctrinal affirmations of Synod. While we hoped that the question of doctrinal statements of synod having confessional standing had been finally settled once and for all, it should have been obvious long ago that a statement which is in keeping with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions is one which ought to be heeded and observed by Synod. We were also happy to see the strong vote on asserting the inerrancy of Scripture, as well as the totally unanimous vote on the matter of body and soul. Theologically this Synod probably spoke more clearly than any in the last twenty years, and we hope and pray that those who have felt it was their God-given duty and privilege to keep Synod in a state of constant doctrinal confusion and irritation got the message.

In the area of church fellowship the watchword is "dialogue." Selective fellowship was rejected, as was affiliation with the National Council of Churches. The Lutheran World Federation was put off for discussion until 1969, and this almost without debate. We reaffirmed our traditional position that there can be no fellowship without previous conversation in a resolution having to do with the establishment of fellowship with the Lutheran Church in America. The matter of the membership in the World Council of Churches was referred to the Commission on Theology, but we predict that many a day will pass before Missouri gets down to a serious consideration of this highly explosive matter. We were happy to see the Synod adopt the carefully reasoned and well worked out "Theology of Fellowship" document. This was one of the finest productions of the Commission on Theology, and we feel that in this instance synod allowed sufficient time for careful study.

Perhaps the most exciting moment of the Convention occurred at the time of the vote on establishing fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. The floor committee advocated the immediate declaration of pulpit and altar fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. However, after a stormy and exceedingly heated debate, the floor committee withdrew its resolution and came in the next day with a resolution which was in essence the proposal of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, namely, that dialogues and discussions between Missouri and ALC be held at all levels, congregation, circuit, pastoral conferences, conferences of theological professors, and districts. Our personal opinion is that this was a wise and intelligent course of action. The documents which had been drawn up between the commissioners of the two synods have not had sufficient study in the field. Not even the Commission on Theology and Church Relations has had time to give them any thorough study. Inasmuch as the men in the

field are going to have to live with the problems of lodgery, unionism, and doctrinal discussions, it seems only fair that a thorough discussion of these matters should take place at the level where the rubber hits the road. The doctrine of Scripture needs far more and deeper discussion than has so far taken place. The matter of inspiration, inerrancy, historicity, hermeneutics, and authority of Scripture all need a good airing. We are of the opinion that a rather great degree of agreement will be found among the members of the two synods, but it is wise that the decision was made to give ample opportunity for thorough discussion of the issues. We hope and pray that the discussions will reveal a wide degree of agreement and that it will be possible for the president of Synod and the district presidents to come with favorable recommendations to the Denver Convention.

The problem of fellowship with the American Lutheran Church, of course, is complicated by the relationship of the American Lutheran Church with the Lutheran Church in America, which thus far has declined to take part in any doctrinal discussion. We hope that LCA men will be drawn into the grass roots discussions as fully as possible.

The Synodical Conference died without a single word spoken in her defense. This writer felt a certain twinge at this rather coldblooded action. For ninety-five years the Synodical Conference has gone on her rocky way, and it seemed almost tragic that her demise was not even marked by one single eulogy. What a commentary on an organization which was established for the purpose of promoting true unity among Lutherans!

In the area of finances, Ebenezer received much enthusiastic emphasis. We call upon all of our readers to pray for the success of this great thankoffering. Surely we have a God-given duty to put our money where our mouth is. We talk well, but Ebenezer is perhaps a better test of what is really going on in our churches and in our lives.

In the field of social welfare some very fine things were done. We were happy to see the document on civil disobedience adopted, we were happy to see a resolution which actually mentioned the poor and our consideration for them. Open housing was discussed and acted on favorably. One of the old wheelhorses in the field of Lutheran Human Relations told me that he had to put his hand in his bosom to see if he was still in the Missouri Synod. He was so thrilled at the social action resolutions.

Dr. Wolbrecht's report on synodical statistics indicated that our growth rate has declined quite drastically. Here again is a matter that ought to be of concern to every member of our church.

We decided to continue calling ourselves The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The convention asked the two seminaries to consider the matter of joint editorship of the Concordia Theological Monthly. We invite our readers to give us their reactions to this proposal.

We were happy to see the establishment of the Board of Evangelism and also the establishment of the office of executive secretary for social welfare. We need to emphasize these matters more.

We wish that our conventions could become agents for great policy making and real leadership. Too many of our actions are really reactions—putting out fires, expressing ourselves on things everyone else has discussed, responding to emergency situations. Let the conventions lead rather than follow its church and the world.

All in all, we felt that it was a good convention and we came away from it with the deepened conviction that Missouri is a great church. We don't always please the world; we don't always even please ourselves. We are sure that we daily fail to please God—yet looking at our church as an agency that can be used by God for preaching His Gospel and glorifying His name, we are bound to confess that we are glad to belong to this church. We have a great degree of loyalty, a great amount of talent, and a doctrinal stance which is equalled almost nowhere else in the world. A convention is an exhilarating and also a humbling experience. We were exhilarated by the actions taken, but we were humbled by our own inadequacy and the enormousness of the task which we face. We pray God that He will continue to bless our church and to use us in the service of His Kingdom.

J. A. O. Preus

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### *Survival or Surrender?*

TO SPEAK of survival or surrender suggests that the very existence of something is at stake. To speak of the survival or surrender of Christian theology reaches even deeper. At stake is nothing less than the very possibility of God-relatedness. For theology asserts and rests upon the possibility of divine revelation and a cognitively veridical experience of that revelation. The greatest crisis in theology today is the question raised by the so-called radical school, to wit, whether there is genuine theology (a word about God) with which to deal. Is there still a Kierkegaardian either/or when we speak of theological survival and surrender?

The word has gone out that we are living through a post-Christian era. From T. S. Eliot's *"The Idea of A Christian Society"* to Gabriel Vahanian's *"Wait Without Idols"*, the ecclesiastical conscience has been challenged, pricked and bombarded by the sensational assertion that ours is a post-religious, post-protestant, post-metaphysical and post-Christian age. The cultural phenomenon of the death of God has been tragically witnessed and agonizingly experienced.

This is a post-Christian era, they say, because there are no *vestigia Dei* in the world. The God-hypothesis is no longer needed.

As Nietzsche already pointed out, the reasons men posited for the existence of God simply do not obtain in our culture. Christian theology is struggling to exist amid a double alienation: it is attempting to survive in a world which is both religiously and culturally non-Christian. The transmission of the traditional faith is predicated on categories which shared in a religious *Weltanschauung* which has been peremptorily dismissed by contemporary man; it is neither honored nor valid. Furthermore, the biblical concept of truth has become nonsensical. *Veritas filia temporis!* Or as Nietzsche contends: Truth waits to be invented. So Western man who once lived under the sign of the cross now is forced to live under the sign of the death of God. As man once willed to be an atheist in spite of God, now man wills to be a Christian in spite of the death of God! Christian man and theology must live *etsi Deus non daretur*. So the question assumes more than mere academic significance. Under these conditions will theology survive or must it surrender?

One alternative (a way of surrender, to be sure) is complete capitulation. The dogmatic locus *De Deo* will be followed by the new locus *De Morte Dei*. On second thought this locus ought properly to be placed at the end of the Dogmatics. Then the admirably Lutheran question might follow: What does this mean? The terse answer will do double duty: *Finis*. Theology will simply disappear; it will be replaced by a kind atheology or Bonhoeffer-type religionless Christianity which might be renamed Christosophy.

Or there might be fresh attempts at revalidation. This has happened before. The cry has gone "out and up" (if Bishop Robinson will pardon the expression) that theology has separated God from the world, the church from society, Christianity from culture, religion from life. God, the church, Christianity and religion must be brought back; if theology can adapt itself to such a reversal it just might possibly survive—of course, in a form radically different from its present shape.

Again, theology might survive if it undergoes a reformation. That's a catchy word, reformation. It strikes a positive chord with both Protestant and Roman Catholic these days! *Ecclesia semper reformanda! Theologia eadem*. And this too would really prove no startling innovation. Theology has been touched by reform in significant epochs and *kairoi* moments in the historic past. Think of Marcion and his work. Though not a bishop (he was only the son of a bishop) he was convinced that the church had obscured the Gospel and that it was his duty to recall theology to its pristine unaccreted form. Unfortunately he lost most of the New Testament and all of the Old Testament in his "reform"—a feat remarkably duplicated in our own time. Or think of Hegel who purified theology via rationalist-historicist "processism," or Schleiermacher who rejected *Das Wissen und Erkennen* in favor of *das unmittelbare Gefuehl*, or Ritschl for whom theology deals only with

*Werturteile.* Theology needs these kinds of reformation about as much as it needs deicide.

Or theology might escape from its petrification—and for some its putrefaction—if it can subject itself to a genuine purification. This means that theology must once more become a genuine word about God, a word about God's self-revelation, a word about God's mighty and saving acts wrought out of grace through Him in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells.

Christian theology will not face the terrible alternatives of survival or surrender if it becomes and continues to be God's servant for instruction and man's servant for understanding. Purification denotes a cleansing: Christian theology must be freed from all idolatrous forms into which it has been cast and in which it remains rigid: fundamentalism, orthodoxism, rationalism, false enthusiasm, liberalism and the various Neo-isms which like a dormant cancer suddenly reappear with remarkable vigor—sometimes in the old places, sometimes in new places.

In brief, theology must on the one hand avoid a moribund propositional objectivism which is never open to the movings of the Spirit and on the other hand refuse to get caught up in an unchecked and unstructured subjectivism which can interpret the most bizarre type of theological ruminating to be the movings of the Spirit. Theology must rather be open to creative renewal. Its structures must be sound and certain, formed by and grounded in the objective Word of truth. At the same time theology must grant that the Spirit works "*ubi et quando* it pleases him," never forgetting that he is the Spirit of the living God who in Christ stands in revealed openness and meets man precisely where he has promised to meet man: in Word and Sacrament, in the community of believers who live under the Word of divine judgment and in the Word of divine pardon. *Theologia a Deo docetur!* He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. If you continue in My Word . . . you shall know the truth!

John F. Johnson, Associate Professor of Systematic  
Theology and Director of Seminary Relations

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### *Earliest Bible Society?*

Probably the earliest association of any size or permanence organized to distribute Bibles was the Canstein Bible Institute, formed in Germany about 1710. The Institute printed Luther's Bible and by 1722 also issued Scriptures in Bohemian and Polish. The British and Foreign Bible Society, the "mother" of the American Bible Society, was organized in London in 1804, and the ABS was formed 12 years later.

American Bible Society News Release, March 1, 1967