

1-1-1953

Theological Observer. – Kirchlich Zeitgeschichtliches

J. T. Mueller

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mueller, J. T. (1953) "Theological Observer. – Kirchlich Zeitgeschichtliches," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 24, Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol24/iss1/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE NEW DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

Under this heading the *Australian Theological Review* (Vol. XXIII, Nos. 1, 2) quotes a bewildered writer who is troubled by a "new doctrine of the Bible," which he believes to be "no less destructive to the Christian faith based on the Bible than is rationalism or modernism." From the *Bible League Quarterly*, in which the article appeared, the *Review* quotes copiously in explanation of the new heresy. We read, in part:

"The Bible is not in any absolute sense the Word of God. Christ is the Word, but inasmuch as the Bible is the most original and authentic source of knowledge of Christ, it is called the Word of God in the sense that the Shakespeare play is called *Hamlet*, because Hamlet is the central figure." — "The new doctrine will make concessions to the older belief. It will teach that the Bible is the Word of God, not merely in part, but as a whole. It will do this, the writer says, as strongly as any 'Fundamentalist' could wish. Thus when the new doctrine is complete, it will show that the Bible is 'the Word made flesh and dwelling among us, taking the form of a servant and being found in fashion as a man.' There is obviously much in this statement that is obscure, and that calls for fuller explanation. What, for example, is intended to be conveyed by comparing the divine and human aspects of the Scripture to the divine and human natures of our Lord? It cannot mean that the human side of Scripture is like Christ's humanity, faultlessly perfect, for the Bible's human side has always been declared to be hopelessly defective. If, on the other hand, it is intended to imply that the humanity of Christ was marked by as many defects as the Bible is supposed to exhibit, it is a suggestion to which Evangelicals could not for one moment assent."

In concluding the article, the writer says: "If we have interpreted it [the new doctrine] with any degree of accuracy, we cannot but regard it with the utmost distrust. It appears to us to be as subtle as it is dangerous. It will repudiate rationalism, but it will retain many of its conclusions. It will employ evangelical phraseology while rejecting essential belief. It will hold out a friendly hand to tenets that are to the plain man mutually exclusive. It will pour its deceptive oil on the troubled theological waters and offer a calm passage to disturbed and anxious souls; yet it may end in the shipwreck of their faith."

Describing the "new doctrine" as a form of Barthianism, the editor of the *Review* writes: "We must expect to meet old foes with new faces; but we shall be safe in an impregnable citadel if in our faith and our teaching we hold to the Holy Scriptures as the very Word of God, given to men by His inspiration, and hence our infallible teacher and guide. To all who in reality are attempting to take this Word from us while assuring us of their desire to make it more truly ours, by breaking with tradition and demonstrating to us its long misunderstood character, we oppose the steadfast reply: It is written!"

J. T. MUELLER

FELLOWSHIP RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE ALC

Among a number of significant resolutions adopted by the American Lutheran Church at its biennial convention held in Waverly, Iowa, in October, those on Christian fellowship are of special relevance. We submit them in their entirety (see *Lutheran Herald*, November 4).

"Whereas the Committee on Fellowship has recommended the following actions to be taken by the Church at this convention, after due consideration we concur in them and urge their adoption:

"(1) *Whereas* the American Lutheran Church has always affirmed its interest in and support of all efforts toward total Lutheran unity, we again reaffirm our conviction that it is necessary and salutary for any and all Lutheran bodies contemplating merger to engage in discussions relating to doctrine and practice as the first step toward closer organizational affiliation.

"(2) *Whereas* the National Lutheran Council has our wholehearted support in its various phases and activities of work, be it

Resolved that the American Lutheran Church increase its interest and support to the end that the National Lutheran Council may be made an even stronger agency for the participating church bodies without in any way infringing upon the autonomy of any church body or usurping its authority.

"(3) *Whereas* the recommendations of the Joint Union Committee meet with our hearty approval, we commend the Committee of 45 for its faithful work in carrying out the directives of the participating church bodies and recommend adoption of the suggested resolutions:

"(a) With the ultimate union in view of those church bodies which shall hereafter agree to the eventual articles of union, and as a necessary step to such articles of union, the American Lutheran Church hereby receives for consideration and action the statements supplementary to the declaration as to doctrine and practice basic in the American

Lutheran Conference, as prepared and submitted by the Joint Union Committee.

"(b) The American Lutheran Church in convention assembled having received and considered the statements regarding doctrine and practice as submitted by the Joint Union Committee of 1952, hereby declares its agreement with and approval of them.

"(c) The American Lutheran Church in convention assembled, in consideration of similar actions by other members of the American Lutheran Conference, hereby authorizes the election of nine members of a Joint Union Committee. The American Lutheran Church hereby instructs and empowers its Committee in co-operation with the other committees to guide the further progress of studies initiated in 1950, to proceed with studies of polity and organizational structure, with preparation of prospective Articles of Union and with tentative drafts for constitutions to be submitted to the respective church bodies for consideration and action.

"(4) *Whereas* there are many matters which should be discussed in the Joint Union Committee before definite action can be taken by the participating bodies acting singly or jointly, be it

Resolved that our Committee on Fellowship together with the Executive Committee of the Church in consultation with the College of District Presidents be empowered to act in behalf of the Church in matters relating to the proposed merger, subject to the approval of the Church at its next convention.

"For their guidance, we draw attention to the resolution of the 1950 convention: 'We empower our representatives on the Joint Union Committee (Evangelical Lutheran Church and United Evangelical Lutheran Church) in making it possible for the other two bodies of the American Lutheran Conference to participate in negotiations toward organic union, with the understanding that their participation or non-participation shall not interfere with the present negotiations looking toward organic union.'

"(5) *Whereas* the second part of the Common Confession is nearing completion, we gratefully submit the report of our committee on the progress in this area of understanding with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and look forward to the early completion of the Common Confession and its submission to our Church.

"(6) *Whereas* the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has asked that the District Presidents, the President, and the Vice-presidents of our two Churches meet with the Committee on Doctrinal Unity of the

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Committee on Fellowship of the American Lutheran Church to discuss practices in the congregational life of both Churches, be it

· *Resolved* to authorize the President, the Executive Committee, and the District Presidents together with our Committee on Fellowship to have such a meeting with the corresponding officials of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for the purpose stated.

"(7) *Whereas* a friendly meeting of our Committee on Fellowship with the Special Commission on Relations to American Lutheran Church Bodies of The United Lutheran Church in America has been held in order to discuss matters of common interest, to seek better understandings, and to increase co-operation between our church bodies, we heartily approve the plan of our Committee and the Special Commission to hold another meeting in the near future.

"(8) *Whereas* our membership and participation in the Lutheran World Federation has brought great blessings to our Church, we thank God for this larger fellowship of fellow Lutherans throughout the world and pledge our co-operation in the projects undertaken by this federation.

"(9) *Whereas* our membership and participation in the World Council of Churches also provides opportunities and blessings for our Church, we note with satisfaction the progress that has been made by this association of churches in the few years of its existence and activity.

"(10) *Whereas* the resolutions of our Church on Selective Fellowship are in need of clarification and revision, be it

Resolved that the Church authorize the Committee on Fellowship to bring in the necessary revisions and interpretations for consideration by our Church at its next convention."

Commenting on the above resolutions, the editor of the *Lutheran Herald* (November 4) observes:

"The entire ten [resolutions] (plus one naming the members of the Joint Union Committee) were passed in less than an hour, with almost no discussion. It was explained that the lack of discussion was due to the fact that the responsible floor committee had spent five days in study and hearings. It was evidently the feeling of the delegates that the resolutions as presented to the convention represented exactly what the Church wants. Then why use valuable time to discuss them further? . . .

"The chief interest very evidently centered in the projected merger

within the American Lutheran Conference. There was not a voice raised, not a syllable uttered, which gave the observer the right to believe other than that the American Lutheran Church holds the same views now that it held when the tri-partite merger was first discussed. . . . The entire tenor of the meeting suggests that the American Lutheran Church is chiefly interested in the merger with which we [Ev. Lutheran Church] have been dealing for several years. Probably her stand will prove to be much like ours, namely, that Augustana's new proposal for an all-inclusive merger has no connection whatsoever with the present negotiations."

P. M. B.

DEDICATION OF NEW HOME OF CONCORDIA HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

Sunday, November 16, was a significant day in the history of Concordia Historical Institute. On that day its new museum and archives building—the first Lutheran building of this type in the country—was dedicated. Dr. Arthur C. Repp, president of the Institute, performed the dedicatory rites, Rev. Richard A. Jesse of Milwaukee preached the sermon, Rev. August R. Suelflow, curator of the Institute, was liturgist, and Dr. J. W. Behnken spoke on behalf of our Synod. Professor Walter E. Buszin was organist for the occasion, and the Girls' Glee Club of the Lutheran High School in St. Louis, directed by William Kirchhoff, sang two choral selections.

Construction of the new building was made possible largely by a substantial legacy left by the late Mr. Louis H. Waltke, first president of the Institute, to whose memory the Museum Room is dedicated. A plaque in memory of Mr. Waltke is affixed to the wall of this room.

The Institute is located on the campus of Concordia Seminary near the south exit. It is constructed of red brick and is divided into the Waltke Museum Room; administrative offices for the curator and secretary; the research room, where anyone interested in doing research on a given phase of Lutheranism in America can work quietly and undisturbed (this room is dedicated to the memory of Dr. W. G. Polack, who was for many years the guiding spirit of the Institute); the workroom in which all materials received are sorted, classified, and catalogued; and the stack room and vault, which house the books, pamphlets, documents, and museum pieces.

Organized in 1927 by a group of 14 charter members, the Institute has as its chief purpose to cultivate a more general interest in the history of the Lutheran Church of America, especially of the Missouri

Synod; to stimulate historical research and to publish its results; and to collect and preserve articles of historical value.

One of the major contributions of the Institute is the publication of its official organ, the *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, edited at present by Dr. Repp. Its many volumes are an indispensable source book on the history of our Synod.

The first full-time curator of the Institute was Dr. Karl Kretzmann. He served the Institute from 1943 to 1948. His successor is Rev. August R. Suelflow. P. M. B.

CONCLUDING POSTSCRIPTS

The Board of Control of the Lutheran Seminary in Thiensville, Wis., recently filled the vacancies which resulted from the death of Professor Adalbert Schaller, who was killed in an automobile accident in the early part of this year, and from the retirement, because of advancing age, of Professor M. Lehninger. The two new professors are Rev. F. E. Blume and Rev. G. Hoenecke. Both men were installed in September in St. John's Lutheran Church, Milwaukee. May God's blessings rest on their labors. May God also keep in His love and grace Professor Lehninger.

. . .

According to the *Lutheran Standard* (November 8) the American Lutheran Church is making progress in its program of Christian parish education. At its convention in Waverly the delegates approved the calling of an additional man for the Parish Education staff. This new staff member is to encourage and assist in starting more Bible classes for young people and adults and in developing parents' classes. The convention also approved the action of its Board of Parish Education in assuming responsibility for enlisting, training, and placing Christian day school teachers, and seeking to advance the work of their Christian day schools. Two new schools were organized in the past year, and the total number of day school pupils was increased by 269. Our congratulations!

. . .

The exalted Christ will return in glory to judge both the quick and the dead. But there are people who have strange notions about that return. In a pamphlet apparently broadcast throughout the country and titled "Christ's Promise to Return" appears the following incredible perversion of Scriptural truth: "Now the two thousand year cycle which the Christ instituted is drawing to a close, and we are passing out of the Piscean age into a new era under the zodiacal sign of Aquarius. This is an astronomical fact which can be verified by

anyone with a knowledge of astronomy (!). And just as Christ brought the revelation of love as the keynote of the Piscean age — symbolized, so the writer says, by Jesus when He said to Peter and Andrew, "I will make you fishers of men" — so the sounding of the note of the Aquarian age — that of universality — requires a new teaching to make this aspect understandable and form the core of the development needed for humanity's progress. That Christ knew He would return at the end of the Piscean age and inaugurate the new Aquarian era was indicated by Him before the Last Supper (!). His instructions to His disciples to follow the man with the pitcher of water and at the place where he went in to make ready the feast, is a symbolic reference to the point in time when the age of Aquarius (the Water Carrier) will be entered, and He will fulfill in the great age of sharing and universal brotherhood, the symbolic enactment of the Last Supper." The Bible has often enough been reduced to a book of symbolism. But it was left to our generation to discover in it the Piscean and the Aquarian age. If we may venture a guess, the next age will be the Asinine age — perhaps it is here even now — symbolized in Scripture by the story which tells of Christ riding on an ass.

P. M. B.

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Soviet Zone authorities have ordered the East German Post Office in Berlin to discontinue immediately the delivery of Western-licensed religious publications and to strike these papers from the so-called postal mailing list. This list contains the names of all publications which the East German Post Office is allowed to handle. The action is tantamount to an official ban of the periodicals in the Soviet Zone. . . . Among the publications affected is the Evangelical Lutheran Church Paper (*Evangelisch Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*), organ of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELK).

• • •

Delegates at the convention of the United Lutheran Church in America, by a vote of 343 to 198, recommended that the Revised Standard Version of the Bible be used in the lessons for the inter-synodical Lutheran service book and hymnal now nearing completion and scheduled for publication in 1955. Present plans, it was stated, call for the King James Version of the Bible in preparing the lessons. This action of the convention, however, has no mandatory effect on the commission preparing the new book. . . . The Augustana Lutheran Church also is on record as urging the substitution of the Revised Standard Version in the lessons. • • •

At the 18th biennial convention of the United Lutheran Church in America, held in Seattle, Wash., it was reported that the Church now has more than 2,000,000 members. They contributed \$8,592,023 in the year ending June 30. . . . Dr. Franklin Clark Fry of New York was elected to his fifth consecutive two-year term as president; also re-elected were Dr. F. Eppling Reinartz, secretary; the Rev. Edmund F. Wagner, treasurer; Dr. G. E. Ruff, editor of the *Lutheran*.

* * *

The general council of the Seventh-day Adventists has sounded a warning against "religion by legislation." The delegates pledged a battle against the extension of Sunday "blue laws" which are reported being sponsored in 14 State Legislatures. Since they observe their Sabbath on Saturday, the Seventh-day Adventists are opposed to laws setting aside Sunday as the day of worship, contending that this interferes with religious freedom and is contrary to the principle of separation of Church and State.

* * *

To ensure the navy a continuing supply of chaplains, probationary appointments as ensigns in the Naval Reserve are being offered to theological students of all faiths who are in attendance this fall at accredited seminaries. The program at the same time offers these students the opportunity to complete their theological training while members of the Naval Reserve. If they discontinue their theological studies, withdraw from school, or fail academically, they will be allowed to resign and receive honorable discharges. The same will be true if, when their theological training is completed, there is no vacancy for them in the Chaplains Corps. If an appointment is available, however, they will enter the service with the rank of lieutenant, junior grade.

* * *

Plans for setting up a Lutheran theological research center for Southeast Asia in Madras, India, will be given priority by the Lutheran World Federation's Department of Theology when it is activated next May. This report was brought to Madras by the Rev. D. R. Devaprasad, professor at the newly opened United Lutheran Theological College in Madras, who had represented the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church at the World Federation's Assembly in Hannover, Germany, in August. Purpose of the proposed center, he said, would be to "foster original research in relation to the religious backgrounds of the East. . . . There is a new interest among church leaders in the study of Christianity in the East. Formerly Christianity was associated, in the

East, with the rulers, and as a result it was confused with foreign imperialism and foreign culture. Today, however, there is a realization that Christianity stands on its own as a world religion. In some circles it is even believed that Christianity should 'reinvade the West' through Indian Christians." * * *

Director J. Edgar Hoover of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in a message prepared for National Catholic Youth Week, October 19-26, pointed out that one million crimes were committed in the first six months of 1952 alone, an increase of 6.4 per cent over the number in the same period a year ago; and, he stressed, "youth led the criminal army. Almost 30 per cent of all persons arrested were less than 25 years of age, and they were responsible for 55 per cent of all robberies, 60 per cent of all burglaries, 69 per cent of all auto thefts, and 43 per cent of all larcenies. Behind these figures lie tragic stories of parental neglect, broken homes, immorality, adult delinquency, and public apathy — painful proof that our nation is suffering from spiritual starvation." * * *

The Catholic Press Association, the Rev. Thomas A. Meehan of New York, president, announced that there are some 17,251,449 subscribers to 549 Catholic newspapers and magazines in the United States and Canada. The total for 145 Catholic weekly newspapers is 3,733,826; for the 404 magazines, 13,517,623. * * *

Adventists attending the celebration of the founding of the first Seventh-Day Adventist International Sabbath School in Rochester, N. Y., 100 years ago, were told that there are now 17,373 such Sabbath schools in 194 countries, with an enrollment of 1,300,000 pupils. * * *

Women's missionary societies of the ULCA have contributed \$850,000 for the church's work last year. Most of this amount was designated for home and foreign missions. . . . These societies now number 102,000 members in 3,546 local groups. * * *

The Most Rev. Maximilian de Fuerstenberg, Papal Internuncio to Japan, released official figures showing that the Roman Catholic population of Japan has increased by 57 per cent in the last five years. The total on June 30, 1952, stood at 171,785. Catholic priests now number 973, of whom 760 are foreigners. THEO. HOYER