

# Concordia Theological Monthly



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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

### CHAPLAIN DISAGREES ON "ARMED FORCES RELIGION"

Under this heading the *National Lutheran* (May—June 1957) publishes a letter of Harry F. Coder, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) U. S. A., in which he takes issue with an article, declaring that the U. S. armed forces are developing a religion of their own. He writes, in part: "In my sixteen years of service I have been a Reserve Chaplain on active duty and a National Guard Chaplain on extended active duty, but never in all my experience have I been ordered to do anything that would offend my conscience as a Lutheran pastor in uniform. In every assignment I have been encouraged to hold a Lutheran service. Of course, if we are weak-kneed and lack the courage of our conviction, we must expect to be taken advantage of. Take the matter of holding a Lutheran service at an Army post. Regulations state that a chaplain will minister to all men of his unit by his own personal ministry or by arranging services of other faiths as far as he is able. No chaplain can be ordered to conduct or participate in a service not in accord with his denominational practices. I have attended the Army Chaplain School three times during my career, and it is true that a General Protestant Devotional Service is held regularly. But no chaplain is forced to attend contrary to his conscience. He may have private devotions of his own or with chaplains of his own faith, and I have never seen any compulsion about the program. Materials for the curriculum of a Post Sunday school do present a problem. In fairness to the children of other Protestant faiths no one denomination can insist that its materials be used exclusively in a union school, but this need not prevent a conscientious Lutheran chaplain from organizing his own instruction classes. I have such a class under my guidance and expect to have many more. It is the church's responsibility and not the Army's to see that chaplains, who represent the church, are not weak-kneed and vacillating. We know what our faith is; and it is for us to be true representatives of our church."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

### SECOND CENTURY REFERENCES TO THE MOTHER OF JESUS

*Religion in Life* (Winter, 1956/57), under this heading, offers an article in which the writer analyzes the teachings of the early church fathers concerning the Virgin Mary and finds that they do not coincide with the modern Roman Catholic dogmas of Mary's immaculate conception and assumption. But neither do they justify Protestant indif-

ference. In the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* it is asserted that Mary "by divinely given power utterly destroyed the force and dominion of the Evil One," and in the bull *Munificentissimus Deus*, that "since the second century, Mary has been designated by the holy Fathers as the new Eve who . . . is most intimately associated with Him [the New Adam, or Christ] in that struggle against the infernal foe which finally . . . resulted in that most complete victory over sin and death." In summing up his findings, Dr. Stephen Penko, a Presbyterian minister, writes *inter alia*: "In contrast to the common Protestant belief, Mary as mother of Jesus does have an important role in the early Christian theology. Jesus received the human form out of her. Thus she represents the *human* element at the birth of the Savior. In consequence of this belief, in the thinking of the early Fathers, Mary is connected always with the *physical* side of Jesus' life (both italics in the original). The Fathers referred to her only in those passages which, in some form or other, dealt with the problem of the human side of Jesus. All references to Mary were made only in connection with Jesus. She had no characteristics or qualities that would be of any value in themselves. This is particularly true of her conception in a virginal state, which is the *signum incarnationis* and of her motherhood. . . . There is absolutely no clue that would indicate the presence of any knowledge of the Roman Catholic doctrines of [her] 'immaculate conception' and 'assumption.'"

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

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

*St. Paul, Minn.* — Archbishop William O. Brady has asked Roman Catholics of the St. Paul archdiocese to help eliminate "abuses" which, he says, have crept into the system under which lay people make offerings and ask priests to offer Masses for them. He called on his people to "ignore" all magazine advertisements from Mass leagues, Mass foundations, and Mass associations which solicit offerings. The archbishop wrote in his weekly column in the *Catholic Bulletin* he fears "that many people respond to such advertisements expecting that their offerings will be accepted as gifts for Masses to be celebrated."

"But," he said, "the fine print promises only 'a remembrance in our Masses' and that, beloved brethren, you already have every day from every priest who celebrates Mass anywhere and at any time. . . ."

"If you wish a Mass to be offered, then ask such offering where you can see the priest accept it, where you know he will record it, and where you understand that both priest and archbishop are careful to make the records, check the duties, and discharge them. . . ."

*Minneapolis, Minn.*—The 9,331-member National Evangelical Lutheran Church is considering the possibility of merging with the two-million member Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. At its annual convention here, the denomination instructed its committee on doctrine and practice to continue negotiations with the Missouri Synod and report back at next year's meeting.

The denomination, of Finnish background, is affiliated with (but not a member of) the Lutheran Synodical Conference, made up of the Missouri, Wisconsin, Slovak, and Norwegian Synods. It has altar and pulpit fellowship with these Synods.

*Omaha, Nebr.*—The 98th annual synod of the Augustana Lutheran Church here adopted a resolution declaring it to be "the official position of the Church that no Lutheran should enter an agreement imposed by the Roman Catholic canon law where the promise is made to rear children in a faith that he himself cannot accept."

*Mankato, Minn.*—The Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church may change its name to "The Evangelical Lutheran Synod." At its annual convention here, the church, which has a membership of 12,000, submitted a referendum on change of name to its congregations. If three fourths of them approve the change, the new name must be ratified at the 1958 convention. The Norwegian label in the name has been a handicap in mission fields, some delegates claimed.

In another action the delegates overwhelmingly defeated a memorial to break off relations with the Lutheran Synodical Conference, of which it is a member with the Missouri, Wisconsin, and Slovak synods. However, it declined to lift an earlier suspension of relations with the Missouri Synod. The synod's committee on intersynodical relations was asked to continue its study of whether the four synods in the Synodical Conference are in doctrinal agreement and to seek to remove any obstacles to unity.

Rev. Milton Tweit, St. Peter, Minn., moved up into the synod presidency, succeeding Rev. Milton H. Otto, Lawler, Iowa, who resigned when he became professor at Bethany Seminary in Mankato. Named to succeed him as vice-president was Rev. Julian G. Anderson, pastor of Hiawatha Lutheran Church, Minneapolis.

*St. Louis.*—Resolutions calling for global expansion of the Lutheran Hour broadcasts and additional U. S. stations for the Family Worship Hour program were adopted by the Lutheran Laymen's League at its 40th anniversary international convention here. The Lutheran Hour,

a world-wide Gospel radio program, and the Family Worship Hour, a 15-minute daily devotional program, are sponsored by the League, an affiliate of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The Lutheran Hour enters its 25th broadcasting season this fall. Delegates also passed a resolution calling for a study by the League of placing "preaching through the press" ads in newspapers.

Highlight of the convention was a Lutheran Hour rally attended by some 2,500 persons. It featured a pageant-tableau depicting the 40-year history of the 100,000-member League. Principal speaker was Dr. Oswald Hoffmann of New York, preacher on the radio program.

The convention's keynote address was made by Dr. John W. Behnken of St. Louis, President of the Missouri Synod. He spoke on the meeting's theme: "Building with Christ."

Addressing a convention dinner, Senator Stuart Symington (D.—Mo.) called for ultimate "peace through disarmament" to end the "atomic stalemate." The Senator, former secretary of the Air Force, said he was "worried" about America's plans "to concentrate almost entirely on all-out war as the only alternative to all-out peace, because if the Soviets continue to nibble successfully with their various limited wars, ultimately they will endanger the free world."

*New York.*—Baptized Lutherans in Latin America total approximately 750,000 persons of the estimated total population of 170 million, according to new statistics issued here. The survey, covering 21 countries, shows Lutherans gathered in 1,659 congregations and 430 "preaching stations." They are served by 464 full-time pastors, 51 missionaries, and "several itinerant ministers." Six of the "parent" churches are U. S. Lutheran church bodies, with the remainder either German or Scandinavian.

The figure represents about 16 per cent of the total estimated Latin American Protestant population of 4,800,000. According to latest statistics, 95 Protestant churches and agencies, employing approximately 4,000 missionaries, are working the area. The number of pastors and missionaries compares with 31,000 Roman Catholic priests and 75,000 "religious"—nonordained church workers serving the predominantly Roman Catholic countries.

These figures, the first tabulation of Lutheran strength "south of the border" in two years, were compiled in a mail survey of churches and mission stations by the Department of Lutheran Co-operation in Latin America of the National Lutheran Council. Announcing survey results, Dr. Stewart W. Herman, department executive director, cautioned they should be used as "an indication of the size of the Christian task

which still confronts us rather than as an exact record of what has already been accomplished." He said that gathering the material had been very difficult in some of the larger countries in which congregations are widely scattered.

A breakdown of the tabulation shows that in eight countries the major Lutheran church is a co-operative body designed to bring together Lutherans of various linguistic and ethnic origins. Referred to as "European Diaspora," they were organized under a program launched five years ago by the Lutheran World Federation's Latin American Committee. Today well over half are nearly self-supporting "Diaspora" churches and are located in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras.

The survey reveals that the greatest Lutheran strength numerically is in Brazil, with 601,998 baptized members in 1,347 congregations, or approximately 80 per cent of all Lutherans in the Southern Hemisphere. Of these 504,811 persons are gathered in 904 congregations and at 227 "preaching points" of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession, a church predominantly of German origin, now an independent and autonomous body. An additional 95,000 are members of 443 congregations of the Lutheran Church of Brazil, originally established by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod of the United States.

Second highest Lutheran membership is in Argentina, with 91,000 members, of whom the majority are in three church bodies with a total of 182 congregations and 92 "preaching points." The remainder are members of scattered congregations of Scandinavian churches.

Smallest Lutheran group in Latin America is in Honduras, with 50 members in one congregation served by an "itinerent ministry."

U. S. Lutheran churches working in the area, in addition to the Missouri Synod, are the United Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Augustana Lutheran Church. Of these the largest congregations have been established by the Missouri Synod and the United Lutheran Church in America. The Missouri Synod, in addition to the 95,000 members of the church it established in Brazil, also has 16,000 members in 93 congregations in Argentina, making it the second largest in the country. It is outnumbered only by the 70,000 member La Plata Church, a German body which includes a small number of Reformed Church members in a predominantly Lutheran membership.

The largest concentration of the United Lutheran Church in America is in Argentina, with 3,766 members in 19 congregations. In addi-

tion to this the ULC also supports churches in British Guiana, 7,000 members in 44 congregations; Puerto Rico, 4,000 members in 16 congregations; and the Virgin Islands, 2,000 members in 6 congregations.

Other U.S. church bodies in Latin America are the Augustana Mission, with 60 members in two congregations in Uruguay; the American Lutheran Church, with 325 members in 12 congregations in Mexico; and the Evangelical Lutheran Church, with 465 members in six congregations and at nine preaching points in Colombia. The World Mission Prayer League, a North American faith mission, also has congregations in Brazil, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

The majority of the remainder of Lutherans in the Southern Hemisphere are of either German or Scandinavian ancestry. They are members of congregations established by their home churches. Most of these churches are served by pastors assigned by the "home church," which in many cases also allocates funds. About half retain both the tradition and the language of the home church.

Dr. Herman noted that increased Lutheran expansion is required in order merely to maintain the present ratio in relation to population. It has been predicted that the present population of 170 million will shoot to 300 million within the next two generations—the highest increase rate in the world because of the high birth rate and the rapidly declining infant mortality rate. Population increase in Latin America since 1920 has been 82 per cent as compared with the total world population growth of 33 per cent during the same period. Protestant population since 1925 has increased from 700,000 to the present estimated 4,800,000.