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Luther and the English Reformation

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# THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

## RELIGION AND THE PRESIDENCY

Under this heading Dr. E. G. Homrighausen in *Theology Today* (July 1960) discusses some of the problems suggested by the title. He believes that "the possibility of a Roman Catholic in the White House must be faced sooner or later. The presidency cannot be barred forever to a Roman Catholic or a Jew, lest they be regarded as second-class citizens." But there is "popular opposition to a Roman Catholic president," and that is "based upon (1) a fear of the growing power of the Roman Church in the United States; (2) its traditional opinion that it occupy a preferred position in a nation where its constituency is numerically stronger than other religious groups; and (3) its policy of denying liberty to religious minorities." He writes: "A Catholic president would give that Church great prestige; it might also impose the Church's ethical positions upon the presidential office. While some liberal churchmen of the Roman Catholic faith tend to accept the principle of religious liberty for all religious groups, the vast preponderance of traditional opinion still favors the limitation of liberty for minorities among which the Roman Church is the preferred religion. The manifest glorification of Roman Catholic officials before whom the laity bow in respect is something quite offensive to non-Catholics. Regardless as to how this act of homage may be interpreted, it is a symbol of power [that is] concentrated in a manifestly sovereign order centered in Rome and which claims for itself secular dominion over the state." Dr. Homrighausen closes his article with these words: "They [many people] are especially concerned about the separation of church and state when traditional Catholic doctrine has regarded the state as the servant of the church." The article, we believe, describes

the misgivings of many voters both fairly and conservatively.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

## SYNCRETISM AND MONOTHEISTIC FAITH

The *Anglican Theological Review* (July 1960) presents a historical overview of this subject arguing that syncretism has always existed and that at least certain forms of it need not be condemned, e.g., joint prayer on special occasions. Thus when a stone seat on the Bethlehem Road was dedicated in memory of Holman Hunt and his Palestinian landscapes, prayer was offered in Hebrew, Arabic, English, and Armenian — Christian, Jew, and Muslim co-operating. However, the impropriety and dangers of such devotional syncretism appear already from the different expressions which in religious history syncretism has had: (1) *assimilation*, current already in pagan thought as when Venus was identified with Aphrodite; (2) *adaptation*, when pagan customs were woven into Christian celebrations; (3) *adoption*, e.g., the choice of December for Christmas Day, following the pagan Yuletide; (4) *accommodation*, as this is exemplified especially by the cultus of the Roman Church, enabling pagans to adopt Christianity without giving up their own gods and religious practices; (5) *absorption*, as when Islam absorbed into its religious system the patriarchs and even Jesus; (6) *amalgamation*, which has no reason or excuse for its existence. It reaches its *ne plus ultra* in such literary endeavors as "The Bible of the World." The writer obviously senses the perils of syncretism when, for example, he writes: "Syncretism may often spell 'tragedy.' Where there is little change of values, there is no change of heart"; or: "This [amalgamation] needs the ability to distinguish the things that differ, and . . . obviate the more insidious and

unforeseen dangers lurking in syncretism. Perhaps the main religious problem synergistically for the monotheistic religions today is their own interrelation as in the matter of united praying."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM  
NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

*Philadelphia, Pa.*—*The Lutheran*, official weekly newsmagazine of the United Lutheran Church in America, observed its 100th birthday on July 6.

With more than 200,000 subscribers, the periodical has the second largest circulation of any Protestant weekly in America. Highest is that of the *Baptist Standard*, published by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, with over 350,000. Largest circulation of a Roman Catholic weekly is believed to be that of *Our Sunday Visitor*, with nearly a million.

Four times *The Lutheran* has started with Vol. 1, No. 1—in 1860 as *The Lutheran, Lutheran and Home Journal*; in 1861, when it was *The Lutheran and Missionary* (after 1881 just *The Lutheran*); in 1896, when it became "the official organ of the General Council"; and in 1919, when it became the periodical of the United Lutheran Church in America, organized through merger of the General Council, the General Synod, and the United Synod of the South.

The next new beginning—and a new Vol. 1, No. 1—is scheduled for 1963. The name *The Lutheran* has been chosen by The Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity for the authorized publication of the new 3,100,000-member Lutheran Church in America, expected to result from merger of the United Lutheran Church, Augustana Lutheran Church, American Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Suomi Synod.

Dr. G. Elson Ruff has been editor of *The Lutheran* for 15 years and is also editor in chief of the United Lutheran Publishing House here. A pastor for 14 years before

he assumed his present post, he is former president of the Associated Church Press and author of *The Dilemma of Church and State*.

In connection with the 100th anniversary of *The Lutheran* Dr. Ruff has written a historical survey of Lutheran journalism in America, with the first of three articles appearing in the magazine's issue of July 6.

*Chicago.*—Top leaders of the National Lutheran Council and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod met in an historic session here to explore the theological implications of inter-Lutheran co-operative relationships. Extending over three days, July 7—9, the closed meeting marked the first time that representatives of the Council and the Missouri Synod have engaged in a positive appraisal of roadblocks to co-operation among Lutherans in America. At its conclusion the two groups issued a joint statement which expressed the unanimous opinion of those present that "the meeting was profitable and would lead to better understanding and closer relationships between the two groups."

The precedent-setting conference at the Lake Shore Club began Thursday night, July 7, with a dinner, followed by approval of a proposed agenda, an exchange of greetings, introductions, and a fellowship hour. Presiding was Dr. Norman A. Menter of Berkeley, Mich., president of the NLC.

Formal discussion of Lutheran relations took place all day and evening Friday and Saturday morning and ended at noon after plans were made for further conversations on the subject.

The two groups agreed to hold a second meeting in St. Louis, Mo., Nov. 18—19. To accommodate this arrangement, the NLC's executive committee voted to change the site of its semiannual session from Chicago to St. Louis and will meet there on Nov. 17 and 18, with the joint consultation to begin the afternoon of the latter day.

Thirty persons participated in the de-

liberations, 21 from the Council and 9 from the Missouri Synod. The NLC's delegation included 14 members of its executive committee, 5 theologians as consultants, and 2 staff officers; that of the Missouri Synod consisted of 4 members of its *Praesidium*, 4 from its Committee on Doctrinal Unity, and a staff officer. Dr. Menter and Dr. Behnken served as co-chairmen of the meeting and alternated as the presiding officers.

Focal point of the talks centered in position papers prepared by the Council and the Missouri Synod to expound their respective views on the doctrinal and practical issues involved in co-operative activities in American Lutheranism. The papers were read by Dr. Bergendoff for the NLC and Dr. Franzmann for the Missouri Synod. The NLC paper stressed:

The proposition of complete unity or none at all cannot be defended on scriptural grounds, nor is it the description of the relations between Christians in church history. Rather the Scriptures teach a unity between the believer and the Redeemer which issues in a unity between believers that varies according to circumstances. It is the continuing task of the Church to identify that unity that exists and bear witness to it that the world may believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The paper of the Missouri Synod pointed out:

A conversation on co-operation has, by common consent, become a consideration of Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession. We have gone deeper and cut wider than any of us perhaps really intended at the outset. We should thank God for that. And we should go on, take the time and do the work that history, that is, the Lord of history is asking of us, aware of the decisions, of the seriousness of whatever decisions we make. The imperative that is over us in our uncertainty and dividedness would seem to be the imperative of 2 Cor. 13:11: and that is a present imperative, a durative one: "Be a-mending!" And it is hardly a usurpation of the prophet's office to say that our chances of attaining Lutheran

unity in America depend on how seriously we are ready to take the imperative.

Both documents had their origin in a study outline which had been mutually agreed to beforehand by subcommittees of the two groups and which was based on Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. Dealing with church unity, the article declares, in part, that: "And to the true unity of the church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments."

The study outline included a series of questions raised by the creedal statement and a list of Scripture passages held germane to the subject. These areas of concern were amplified and interpreted in the position papers which were read and discussed by the two groups.

Contained in the study outline were the following questions:

How are we to understand "the doctrine of the Gospel"? What teachings are to be included in said "doctrine," on which agreement is necessary? What interpretations may be left to individual judgment? Scripture passages listed were: Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 3:11; 15:3-5; 2 Cor. 5:16 ff.; 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 1:1.

Are there injunctions in "the doctrine of the Gospel" which imply growth in sanctification, wherefor a distinction is to be made between "the standard of doctrine" and the varying degrees of obedience to the standard? Scripture passages listed were: Rom. 6:17-19; 2 Cor. 9:13; Phil. 1:27 ff.; 3:12-16; 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

How shall we define "the true unity of the church?" The nature of this unity — John 17:11, 20; Rom. 14:4-7; 1 Cor. 12:12 ff. and 1:9, 10; and Eph. 2:11-20 and 4:1-16. Are there stages in its attainment? — Acts 1:12-14; 2:42; 4:24 ff.; 12:5; 15:5, 6 and 15:22-29; Phil. 3:15 and 2 Peter 3:15. Variety of Manifestations — Rom. 15; 1 Cor. 3:9; 4:1 ff.

In the light of "the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments,"

and of our understanding of "the true unity of the church," we can make a statement regarding the "it is enough," wherein we require neither too much nor too little, but what is "enough for the true unity of the church"? — 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 1:27; 2:1-3; 1 Peter 3:8.

Representatives of the two groups met in Chicago last Nov. 19 to plan the date and agenda for the conference held here.

*Minneapolis.* — The *Lutheran Standard*, official periodical of the American Lutheran Church, organized this year by a three-way merger, will begin publication here in January as a 32-page biweekly with a circulation of more than 250,000. The new magazine will replace the *Lutheran Standard* of the present American Lutheran Church, the *Lutheran Herald* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the *Ansgar Tidings* of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church. All three are weeklies.

Dr. Edward W. Schramm, editor of both the present and the new *Standard*, moved from Columbus, Ohio, to Minneapolis late in June and will edit both magazines until the end of this year at his offices in the Augsburg Publishing House. The present *Standard* will continue to be published in, and mailed from, Columbus until the new periodical is issued.

*New York.* — A son of the church leader who directed the National Lutheran Council for 18 years has been named executive secretary of its Division of American Missions. He is Dr. Robert W. Long, 50, for the past ten years pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio, a congregation of the American Lutheran Church.

His father, the late Dr. Ralph H. Long, served as executive director of the Council from 1930 until his death in 1948. His two brothers are also pastors in the ALC, Edward at Austin, Tex., and James at Massillon, Ohio.

Elected by the Executive Committee of the

NLC, Dr. Long will assume his new post in Chicago on Sept. 1 as successor to Dr. H. Conrad Hoyer, now associate executive secretary of the Division of Home Missions of the National Council of Churches. Dr. Hoyer headed the NLC's missions program for 17 years before joining the interdenominational agency on July 1.

*New York.* — More than a million dollars worth of government-donated surplus commodities were shipped to four countries during June by Lutheran World Relief, material aid agency for the National Lutheran Council and The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. Total shipments during the month amounted to 15,854,914 pounds of supplies valued at \$1,815,073, it was reported here by Carl F. Lorey, administrative secretary of LWR, and went forward to nine countries.

Food shipped abroad totaled 15,168,407 pounds valued at \$1,109,408. Jordan received 12,000 bags of flour; Korea 649 drums of powdered milk, 840 bags of cornmeal, and 2,000 bags of flour; Taiwan or Formosa, 1,830 bags of cornmeal and 8,580 bags of flour; and Yugoslavia, 81,238 bags of flour and 16,570 drums of powdered milk. Large amounts of used clothing and bedding were also sent to Jordan, Korea, Yugoslavia, Austria, Germany, and Hong Kong, while Jordan, India, and Taiwan also received substantial supplies of medicines.

Chile, now facing a gigantic task of reconstruction after the devastating earth- and seaquakes that struck the country late in May and early June, continued to receive aid from LWR. June shipments there included used clothing, bedding and shoes, kiddies' kits, and 1,500 gallons of paint. Clothing and food valued at \$338,366 has been shipped by LWR to Chile this year, and a large share of these supplies has been diverted from its regular relief program in that country to help the thousands of victims of the Chilean disaster.