

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

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# THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

## GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL INSTITUTE

The *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (April 1960), under this heading, reports that on Wednesday, Feb. 17, an impressive ceremony in the Vatican Aula delle Benedizioni commemorated the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Pontifical Biblical Institute at Rome. Pope John himself was present and warmly congratulated the institute upon its "brilliant record of service." The main address was delivered by Cardinal Augustine Bea, S. J., professor at the institute for 35 years and rector for 19, who highlighted the history and achievements of the school. More than 1,200 Scripture professors all over the world have received their degrees from the institute, of whom 193 in 36 nations are still teaching. In his congratulatory oration Pope John laid special emphasis on the charter of the institute, which decrees that *doctrina biblica* is to be promoted through the school. He also urged that the "teaching of the Bible" be integrated into the general mission of the church and her teaching apostolate. This apostolic utilization of the institute's studies should, however, not detract from the "scientific seriousness" with which its members pursue their tasks. But here the pope quoted also from the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* of his predecessor and commented that the scholar must take care never to confuse what is proved with what is merely a working hypothesis. He closed with a "fatherly reminder" of the necessity of absolute fidelity to the sacred deposit of faith and the church's magisterium in the spirit of the institute's charter, which charges the members to promote sound Biblical doctrine *sensu Ecclesiae Catholicae*.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

## FROM A MARBURG SERMON

*Theology Today* (April 1960), under this heading, presents a passage taken from a sermon based on Luke 5:1-11 and preached by Rudolph Bultmann in 1941, the same year in which he published his controversial essay on "New Testament and Mythology." Since lack of space prevents the publication of the whole passage as given in the quarterly, we quote merely Bultmann's way of dealing with Luke's narrative of the "miraculous draft of fishes," which plainly illustrates the demythologizing professor's methodology in the pulpit. He said:

We are not debating whether this story is an actual occurrence or whether it is reverent poetry, a legend. But lest I be misunderstood, let me say that I do regard it as reverent poetry. But whether it is the report of a historical event or whether it is a poetic creation, in either case it still teaches us what it intends to teach. We must understand it as a symbol depicting the wondrous power which Jesus can achieve over human life. The story itself guides us to the necessity of so understanding it. For its central point is not that Peter made a miraculous haul but that Peter is called to be an apostle, a proclaimer of the Word. When Jesus says to Peter, "Henceforth you will be catching men," it is apparent that the wonder of his fishing is the symbol for something far greater. The true wonder (yes, true *miracle*) is Peter's effectiveness as an apostle, the effectiveness of the divine Word spoken by a human mouth. *This* wonder is just what the symbol of the wondrous catch of fish is intended to display. (Italics in original.)

By way of introducing his interpretation Bultmann said: "Christian faith is faith in wonder, faith in the wondrous dealing of God, readiness to experience God's wonders in our own lives." But if that is true why not accept the narrative as a historic event, for as such it evidently is recorded by the evangelist. Luther certainly treats this

pericope (5th Sunday after Trinity) in a far different and by far more comforting way than does Bultmann. (Cf. *Hauspostille*, Saint Louis, XIIIa, pp. 73 ff.)

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM LUTHERAN SOURCES

*Geneva.*—Evangelicals in both parts of Germany and Lutherans in other parts of the world commemorated, in April, the 400th anniversary of the death of Philip Melanchthon, 16th-century German humanist who was Martin Luther's chief collaborator.

Main celebrations were held in Germany at Wittenberg, the Soviet Zone locality where Melanchthon died and is buried, in Bretten, the West German town where he was born, and at Berlin, the city where East and West meet. Melanchthon, who died on April 19, 1560, was the chief author of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, classic expositions of Lutheran doctrine.

German Evangelicals found it impossible to have a single large commemorative program at Wittenberg because not all the church and university leaders from the West who wanted to attend were granted East German visas.

Among those whose applications were refused were Dr. Wilhelm Halfmann of Kiel, presiding bishop of the Lutheran Church of Schleswig-Holstein, and Dr. Vilmos Vajta of Geneva, director of the Lutheran World Federation's department of theology.

The series of special events at Wittenberg began on April 19 with a memorial service beside Melanchthon's grave in the historic castle church. The service was conducted by Bishop Johannes Jänicke of Magdeburg, head of the Province of Saxony Evangelical Church. The Halle School of Church Music sang some of Melanchthon's sayings and writings set to music for the first time.

Closing the 6-day Wittenberg program was a public rally at which an illustrated address

on Melanchthon was given by Dr. Oskar Thulin, director of the local Luther Hall, which houses the world's best-known Reformation museum.

At Bretten, Dr. Moritz Mitzenheim of Eisenach, bishop of the Lutheran Church in Thuringia, brought greetings from the Soviet Zone church and the Evangelical Church in Germany.

He said Melanchthon's constant striving for agreement, reconciliation, and the avoidance of splits was something the world greatly needs today.

Representatives of many European universities attended the Bretten celebration, which was arranged jointly by the local town authorities and the United Protestant Church of Baden.

In Berlin the program was prepared by the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg and the Melanchthon Association. The Church's head, Bishop Otto Dibelius, declared that the Christian movement must have both divine strength as it was found in Luther and divine wisdom as it was found in his co-laborer.

*New York.*—Protestant minorities in Latin America are a good influence on Roman Catholicism there, according to a Lutheran world missions expert.

Dr. Arne Sovik, director of the Lutheran World Federation's Department of World Mission, pointed out in an interview here that the impact of Protestantism in Latin American countries "has been wholesome for the Roman Catholic Church, which is trying hard to overcome weaknesses which have resulted in strong anticlerical movements."

"In every country I visited the complexion of the Roman Catholic religion is changing, due in part to Catholic reaction to Protestant missions," he said. "The activity of Protestants in these countries has been beneficial to the Roman Catholic Church."

Dr. Sovik made his observations after an eight-week visit to Argentina, Chile, Bolivia,

Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay, and Brazil, where he attended the LWF executive committee meeting held in March.

Commenting that the fastest-growing group of Protestants in Latin America are the Pentecostals, Dr. Sovik said that the section of population which is responding most wholeheartedly to this movement is the one which has been least adequately served by the Roman Church.

Lutheranism in Latin America, he said, must continue "to move purposefully toward an integration into the life and culture of the continent, with growing emphasis on the Spanish and Portuguese languages."

Paying tribute to the work of the LWF Committee on Latin America, Dr. Sovik said he was impressed with how quickly the church is moving in Latin America, under its leadership.

"A major function of the Lutheran Church in Latin America at this stage is to assist Northern European Lutheran immigrants in their very difficult adjustment to life in a Latin culture," the missions executive added. "To do this the church itself must be adaptable to the environment."

Struck by the many differences on the South American continent, Dr. Sovik contrasted the atmosphere in Colombia, where average Lutheran Church attendance is more than the church membership, with that in Uruguay, where religious indifference is so great that one of the country's leading newspapers does not capitalize the word *God* and where Holy Week is observed as National Tourist Week.

"In Colombia the problem is to respond to the religious needs of the people, whereas in Uruguay the problem is to convince the people that Christianity has something to say," he observed.

Dr. Sovik was in the United States en route home to Geneva, Switzerland. He attended the constituting convention of the American Lutheran Church, held in Minneapolis, Minn.,

when the American, Evangelical, and United Evangelical Lutheran churches merged to form a new church body.

An American born in China as the son of missionaries, Dr. Sovik was ordained by the ELC in 1943. He has held his present position as director of the LWF Department of World Mission since August 1957.

*Monrovia, Liberia.*—The centenary of the initiation of Lutheran missionary work in this west African republic was celebrated here with a program in which Liberian President William V. S. Tubman took part.

This missionary work, from which the Evangelical Church in Liberia was organized in 1948, is an overseas enterprise of the United Lutheran Church in America.

Heading the list of visiting church leaders on the centennial program April 24—30 were Dr. Earl S. Erb of New York, executive secretary of the ULCA Board of Foreign Missions, and the Rev. Stefano R. Moshi, president of the Lutheran Church of Northern Tanganyika.

Mr. Moshi is the African member of the Lutheran World Federation Commission on World Mission. His 134,000-member church is the second largest Lutheran body on this continent. He delivered the principal address of the celebration in this city's big central pavilion.

The anniversary week opened on April 24 with special observances in the 37 congregations of the 5,000-member Liberian Church. For the rest of the week, representatives from all the parishes gathered for festivities here and at Muhlenberg.

Muhlenberg is the name that was given to the first mission center, 25 miles up the St. Paul river from here, when it was established on April 27, 1860, by the pioneer missionaries, the Rev. Morris Officer and Henry Heigard.

*Geneva.*—With the assistance of mediators appointed by the Lutheran World Federation, a factional split of several years' exist-

ence in India's second-largest Lutheran church body has been healed, it was announced at LWF headquarters here.

Final steps to reconciliation in the 209,000-member Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church of northeastern India, oldest autonomous Lutheran body in that country, were taken in April at Ranchi, Bihar, it was reported at the office of the federation's Department of World Mission.

The announcement was based on a verbal report to the department by one of the mediators, Bishop Heinrich Meyer of Lübeck, Germany, chairman of the LWF Commission on World Mission. Bishop Meyer stopped here en route home from the meetings in India, in which he played a key role.

He said he and other members of a specially named "ecumenical commission" saw their efforts crowned with success when the Gossner Church, at a fully representative convention, unanimously adopted a reorganization plan designed to protect the interests of all groups within its membership.

At a six-day convention which closed on April 29, representatives of both factions showed "an extremely good spirit" and "expressed satisfaction with the outcome," said Bishop Meyer, who is head of the Lutheran church in Lübeck and a former missionary of more than 20 years' service in India.

Surpassed in size among Indian Lutheran bodies only by the 257,000-member Andhra Lutheran Church, the Gossner Church owes its origin to work started in 1844 by the Gossner Mission Society of Berlin. It was constituted as an autonomous body in 1919.

After several years of a split due mainly to rivalry and discord between two large tribal groups which embrace most of the church's membership, leaders of the two parties early in 1959 showed a readiness to sit down together and seek a settlement of their differences.

A provision of this settlement was the establishment of the "ecumenical commis-

sion" to draft a reorganization plan and otherwise help "restore peace and order in the church."

*New York.* — Dr. Oswald C. J. Hoffmann, Director of Public Relations for The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, visited Russia and Poland early in May during a ten-week trip abroad.

Speaker on the world's largest non-government-sponsored broadcasting operation, the Lutheran Hour, Dr. Hoffmann's weekly radio messages are adapted, translated, and regularly beamed behind the Iron Curtain.

During his visit in Moscow, believed to be the first ever made there by a Missouri Synod clergyman, Dr. Hoffmann visited with Metropolitan Nicolai, bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church; Dr. Jakov Zhidov, pastor of the lone Protestant church (Baptist) in the Red capital; and other church and secular leaders.

From Moscow Dr. Hoffmann went to Warsaw, Poland, where he conferred with Dr. Andreas Wantula, bishop of the Polish Lutheran Church.

During June and early July Dr. Hoffmann served as adviser on a Lutheran film depicting the role of the Christian faith in meeting the relentless pressures of life under a Communist state in Europe. The picture is being produced by Lutheran Film Associates, composed of the same church groups that sponsored the film *Martin Luther*.

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE

*East Orange, N. J.* — Delegates to the 90th annual convention of the New York Conference of the Augustana Lutheran Church here called on the denomination's executive council for increased activity in creating and supporting parochial schools.

In a resolution, delegates from the seven-state conference area noted that the Augustana Church "has not been directly involved

in the establishment of many such schools among its member congregations."

They urged a "more favorable climate for those parochial schools now operating and for those which may be established in the future."

*Red Wing, Minn.* — Minnesota Protestant Episcopal parishes were urged to use their church school facilities for week-day parochial schools, "at least for the lower grades."

The proposal was made by Bishop Hamilton H. Kellogg, Minneapolis, at the annual convention of the Minnesota diocese here.

Bishop Kellogg, in his report, said a parochial school "provides an opportunity for a more personal relationship between the student and the teacher, by virtue of smaller classes, than normally is possible in a public school."

"Then, of course," he added, "there is the advantage of being able to teach the Christian religion as a regular course, which is not possible in a public school."

Parochial schools also would make it possible to use church education buildings almost every day of the week instead of only on Sundays, he pointed out.

Bishop Kellogg expressed concern about the "loss to an inactive status of so many of our members who . . . have slipped away from the main stream of church life here in Minnesota and are drifting in the shadows of spiritual inactivity and lethargy."

He called for a plan of action "to bring back into the fold the inactive and lapsed members of our missions and parishes."

*London.* — British Roman Catholics here greeted with "very great pleasure" reports from the Vatican that the Sacred Congregation of Rites has reopened the canonization cause of 40 of the English and Welsh Catholic martyrs of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The 40 are among 197 martyrs who have been beatified and are called Blessed. Beatification is a major step toward canonization.

Among the 40 Blessed are 32 priests, one brother, four laymen, and three laywomen.

Following beatification, the certification of two miracles attributable to the intercession of the Blessed are required for sainthood. However, it is believed that for this requirement the 40 will be treated as one group, instead of individually — meaning that only two miracles will have to be certified, instead of 80.

In connection with the canonization cause, the Roman bishops here have designated July 10 as Martyr Sunday, when special prayers will be said for the Blessed. The Feast of the Blessed English Martyrs is observed in this country on May 4.

The martyrs died for their faith between the schism of King Henry VIII and 1681. Two of them were canonized in 1935. They were St. John Fisher, cardinal-bishop of Rochester, and St. Thomas More, chancellor of the realm.

Plans are under way for the erection of a shrine to the martyrs, also known as the Tyburn Martyrs, in Hyde Park, near the spot where once stood the Tyburn tree. The actual site of the tree, scene of many martyrdoms, is marked by a little triangle of brass set into the surface of the road by the Marble Arch.

The shrine will adjoin the rebuilt Tyburn convent, where Benedictine nuns keep perpetual watch before the Blessed Sacrament in honor of the martyrs.

*Cincinnati.* — Still a live issue in Lutheran merger negotiations is the question of membership in fraternal lodges, but an amicable solution seems to be in sight, the 40th annual convention of the Ohio Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America was told.

Judge James F. Henninger of the Common Pleas Court, Lehigh County, Pa., official ULCA representative to the convention here, said the problem of membership in secret

orders is especially keen in Ohio Synod congregations as 80 per cent of them stem from the old General Council of the Lutheran Church, which actively opposed lodges.

Under the proposed merger of the ULCA with three other bodies—the Augustana, American Evangelical, and the Finnish Evangelical (Suomi Synod) Lutheran Churches—newly ordained Lutheran pastors will be expected to abstain from lodge membership or be subject to discipline, Judge Henninger said.

He explained that the proposed constitution of the projected denomination—to be called the Lutheran Church in America—

declares that “no person who belongs to any organization which claims to possess in its teaching and ceremonies that which the Lord has given solely to His Church shall be ordained or otherwise be received by this Church.”

“Nor shall any person so ordained or received,” the constitution adds, “be retained in (the Church’s) ministry if he subsequently joins such an organization. Violation of this rule shall make such ministers subject to discipline.”

The new church is scheduled to begin functioning Jan. 1, 1963, if the merging bodies approve the constitution.