

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

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# THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE N. E. B.

Dr. H. T. Kerr in *Theology Today* (October 1961) discusses *The New English Bible* which came off the press this year. He states that almost without exception the new translation was "hailed as a brilliant piece of Biblical and textual scholarship." Yet he speaks also of a "mixed reception" which is due to "the changed climate of both religious and secular thinking today." "In America," he says, "we have since 1946 been getting used to the RSV, and with so much success that in many areas it has virtually superseded the King James." "New translations of the Bible invariably meet with cautious and critical appraisal" and "the reason is usually sentimental and nostalgic." He believes however that "it is unlikely that either RSV or NEB will celebrate a 350th birthday—for one thing the English language is now changing more in decades than it did in centuries." Then too "the old verbal literalism has lost its stranglehold . . . and this has freed the translators to translate ideas as well as words." The writer closes his article with the words: "The translator's task, like the Reformation which did so much to bring the Bible to the people, is a continuing responsibility and an unending pilgrimage. One reason why many expect too much and feel disappointed with what they get, is because they want to jell the Bible into a mold that will last 350 years. But we need not only new and better translations of the Bible, we also need continuing study of the Scriptures to interpret them not only historically, grammatically, textually, but in such a way as to make the Word of God living and meaningful for our day and age. The interpreter, whether he be pulpit preacher or Sunday school teacher, picks up where the translator leaves off."—The "translation of ideas" must of course be kept within the scope of

the meaning of the words, which means that the translator must try to say as exactly as possible what the original Hebrew or Greek text says.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

## A UNITARY GOD WITH JESUS AS HIS FIRST THEOLOGIAN

Under this heading Prof. Otto A. Piper of Princeton Theological Seminary discusses on nearly seven pages in *Interpretation* (October 1961) Prof. Guenther Bornkamm's *Jesus of Nazareth* (translated by Irene and Fraser McLuskey. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1960), which, as he states, has been hailed by some American scholars as "the best presentation of Jesus that we have" and as an "event in the intellectual history of our time." From these views he feels himself obliged to dissent, though his discussion is in general sympathetic and objective. A few sentences from the review of the able Princeton scholar may help such readers as might desire to read the book to orient themselves to Bornkamm's basic thought. Dr. Piper writes:

In order fully to be understood, Bornkamm's book must be read against the background of Bultmann's approach to the Gospels and the kerygma. As is well known, the eminent German scholar eliminates everything from the Gospels that is supranatural because taking it seriously would be incompatible with the spirit of modern science. What is left is a Jewish rabbi who proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom. The message of the New Testament epistles is then demythologized, that is, transformed into an existentialist religion in which a timeless "Christ event" is central. Bultmann's younger followers have learned enough from their master's critics to realize that his view of faith is dangerously close to an atheistic existentialism à la Heidegger or Sartre, that is to say, an attitude in which the individual is his own redeemer. . . . Bornkamm looks in good

Kantian fashion for an autonomous religion: certain formal ideas which are constitutive of all true religion. . . . This new position . . . does not differ in principle from Bultmann's. Though faith is not necessarily to be understood in existentialist terms, nonetheless the theologian has already arrived at the knowledge of the religious truth before he opened his New Testament, and consequently everything in the Gospels that is not fit to illustrate this truth is a priori doomed to be rejected. This point is particularly obvious in Bornkamm's treatment of the resurrection. . . . Far from proclaiming Himself as the Savior or from believing in His divine mission, the Jesus who emerges from the German theologian's historical research is a rabbi or prophet who proclaims the dawn of God's reign and who enjoins everybody to accept the new law if they want to enter into the divine kingdom. . . . But whereas in the ecclesiastical tradition the foundational function of Jesus consists in His lifework culminating in His Passion, Bornkamm describes it primarily as teaching. The larger part of his book deals with Jesus' message of the dawn of the kingdom of God, the will of God, and discipleship.

Dr. Piper writes in conclusion:

There would be no salvation if there were no divine activity going on in this world at the same time. . . . No wonder that the whole New Testament should emphasize that notwithstanding His truly human life Jesus was the Son of God. The faith of His followers, far from being a misunderstanding of this man Jesus, was experienced as the very evidence of His redemptive ministry. Those who came into contact with Him were radically changed in their nature. Thus the oral tradition was passed on by witnesses. They vouched for the reality of the events, but they also bore testimony to the redemptive power that manifested itself in the man Jesus. That is the reason why our faith needs both the reliable historical record and also the spiritual witness that apprehended the divine message, spoken in and through the life of Jesus.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### DARE WE FOLLOW BULTMANN

Under this heading Dr. Walter Kuenneth, professor of systematic theology in Erlangen, in *Christianity Today* (Oct. 13, 1961) discusses Rudolf Bultmann's critical method and then points out a number of reasons "why we must oppose Bultmann." According to Kuenneth, Bultmann's critical method amounts to a total denial of the Christian method of salvation as presented in the New Testament. Thus it denies the kerygma as the report of a completed event of salvation. For Bultmann there is no incarnation; the eternal Logos did not assume human flesh. Under Bultmann's interpretation the fundamental importance of the cross of Jesus evaporates to the position of being a mere sign for the fact that it is worthwhile to bear one's own suffering willingly. The Easter reports are dismissed as legends and, so far as faith is concerned, the appearances of the Resurrected are dispensable and unessential. With this distorted method of interpretation it is inevitable that Christian eschatology must be demolished. Bultmann stresses: "Awaiting the coming of the Son of Man is over," for, as he sees it, the expectation of the parousia of the early church has been shown to be an error. The concept of the "final day of judgment" is merely a mythological way of speaking. For Bultmann "Jesus Christ" represents not a personal living reality of God's saving revelation in the sphere of history but merely a concept, an ideogram, a symbol or a principle for the event of contemporary preaching. In conclusion Professor Kuenneth says: "The pretentious way to which Bultmann directs us, shows itself to be a wrong way of dangerous heresy."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

*New York.*—Financial grants totaling \$724,500 have been made by the Ford Foundation through the National Lutheran

Council to strengthen and develop the Faculty of Economics at Nommensen University in Sumatra. The NLC administers the funds under a cooperative relationship between the Council and the University, which was established in 1954 by the Batak Christian Protestant Church of Indonesia. The 750,000-member Batak Church is affiliated with the Lutheran World Federation.

Opened by the Batak Church in October 1954, Nommensen University was named in honor of Ludwig I. Nommensen, a missionary of Danish nationality who was sent out by the Rhenish Mission Society of Germany in 1861 and became known as the "Apostle to the Bataks."

The University's Faculty of Economics, with about 400 students enrolled, is located at Medan, in northeast Sumatra. With the help of the Ford Foundation's grant, daytime classes have replaced night sessions at the school and a graduate course of study has been developed leading to a "doctorandus" degree. The University also includes a theological seminary whose campus is located at Siantar, a small but relatively modern provincial town between Medan and Lake Toba. The seminary has some 150 students.

*New York.*—Efforts to construct a new \$3,000,000 medical center in Tanganyika—a project being spearheaded by Lutheran churches—have been aided by a \$200,000 gift from an American Lutheran donor, it was announced here. The Rev. Oscar R. Rolander, secretary of the Department of World Missions Cooperation of the National Lutheran Council, said the donor, who asked to remain anonymous, also has given \$30,000 toward reconstruction of the old Lutheran Mission Hospital at Bumbuli in northeast Tanganyika.

Plans to establish the new 400-bed facility at Moshi, on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, were formulated a year ago as an outgrowth of discussions between members of

the board of the Federation of Lutheran Churches of Tanganyika and the Tanganyika Ministry of Health. Since that time, the Commission on World Mission of the Lutheran World Federation has designated its Department of World Mission to assume responsibility for coordination and fund-procurement for the hospital and the project has been included in the DWM's community development program. In Tanganyika, leadership has been assumed by the Good Samaritan Foundation, an organization primarily composed of Lutheran representatives but also including other Protestant bodies.

*New York.*—Lutheran World Relief shipped 158 cases of medicines valued at \$81,291 to five countries in September. The medicines, mostly antibiotics, were sent to India, 67 cases; Jordan, 52 cases; Malagasy Republic (Madagascar), 15 cases; New Guinea, 14 cases, and Burma, 10 cases. The shipment to Burma was in answer to an emergency call to assist victims of devastating floods. The other shipments were part of a continuing medical-aid program by the material aid agency.

Bernard A. Confer, LWR executive secretary, said the formation this year of a new organization, Interchurch Medical Assistance, has made it possible for the Lutheran agency to increase its overseas medical shipments substantially. Medicine and medical equipment is made available to LWR and several other Protestant relief agencies which support the new organization. IMA was formed early this year to coordinate the solicitation of drugs and medical supplies from a variety of sources.

LWR, the overseas material-aid arm for National Lutheran Council participating bodies and the Board of World Relief of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, sent a total of 7,723,578 pounds of relief goods valued at \$675,969 to 12 countries in September.