

# THE SPRINGFIELDER

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## Contents

Page

### EDITORIALS

The Rapture	1
Belly Servers	1
DR. C. F. W. WALTHER, AN EVANGELICAL LEADER IN HIS SYNOD	3
Mark J. Steege, Professor, Homiletics	
THESES ON THE SEVENTH ARTICLE OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION	13
Hermann Sasse, Adelaide, Australia	
REVITALIZING CONGREGATIONAL SINGING	18
Ralph Gehrke, River Forest, Illinois	
THE PASTORAL EPISTLES AND SOUND DOCTRINE	26
Raymond Surburg, Professor, Old Testament	
THE CONFESSIONS FOR TODAY'S STUDENT OF THEOLOGY: A SESSION WITH SCHNEEWEISS ON SCRIPTURE	31
Robert Bertram, Valparaiso, Indiana	
BOOK REVIEWS	36
Books Received	53

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Address communications to the Editor, Erich H. Heintzen, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Business correspondence should be addressed to Norman A. Bunby, Business Manager, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

# Editorials

## *Reflections on the Rupture*

IT HAD to come. The successive steps which the leadership of the Wisconsin Synod had taken placed the delegates to the August Convention of that Synod on the horns of a dilemma: either repudiate the leadership of the Synod or break with Missouri. Ecclesiastical structures being what they are, the resultant vote was almost inevitable. Officialdom was sustained.

We cannot but regret that two significant segments of Lutheranism are no longer in official fellowship. We particularly regret that so many "little people" are hurt by the action of the Wisconsin Synod Convention. Pious and God fearing lay people—many of whom have never heard of the "unit concept of fellowship"—have had their formal fellowship with relatives and friends broken by the vote of a convention.

We also regret that certain blessed cooperative endeavors will inevitably suffer as a result of the action of the Wisconsin Synod. The glorious work of Bethesda, a great institution of mercy, will undoubtedly be hampered at a time when the need for its ministry of mercy is more necessary than ever. For approximately three decades the Wisconsin Synod played a significant role in the sponsorship of the signally successful Nigerian mission. We can speculate on the reaction of the native Christians to the break in relations between two of the supporting Synods.

Recently Missouri's Doctrinal Unity Committee regretfully took cognizance of the Wisconsin Synod's action and at the same time agreed to continue to meet with the representatives of Wisconsin even "outside the framework of fellowship" with the hope that such meetings can result in a restoration of formal fellowship.

G. J. B.

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## *Belly Servers*

ONE of the frequently-used passages of Scripture in the deterioration and ultimate rupture of relations with the Wisconsin Synod was Romans 16, 17-18.

The use of this passage by the Wisconsin Synod is—we believe—the first instance of applying these words of Scripture to the Missouri Synod. For the first time the Missouri Synod is referred to as a “belly server.” Hitherto the Missouri Synod has never been accused of using “good words and fair speeches” to deceive “the hearts of the simple.” Missouri, who in the past used this passage somewhat indiscriminately in her relations with other Lutherans and with other Christians, finds herself categorized with those who “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly.”

In the past we could never develop any enthusiasm for the use of Romans 16, 17-18 in describing the people of another Lutheran body pledged in their loyalty to the same Scriptures and same Confessions which we accept.

We have considerably less enthusiasm for its use in characterizing us. In spite of our ecclesiastical and personal shortcomings, we refuse to admit that we—as a corporate church body or as individuals—do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ but our own belly.

Moreover, we are inclined to believe that nothing which has happened in the past (*A Statement* and the *Faculty Statement on Fellowship*) will do as much to occasion the discontinuance of our application of this passage to other Lutherans as the Wisconsin Synod’s unwarranted use of it against us.

G. J. B.

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#### NEW STAFF MEMBER

We are pleased to announce the addition of Dr. Richard Jungkuntz to *The Springfielder* editorial staff, as editor of Book Reviews.

E. H. H.