



—Journal Photos

SAVED AGAIN — For the second time in as many weeks, Siegbert Becker, an amateur bee keeper, came to the rescue of Mercy high school students and faculty members. Thursday he removed a second swarm of bees which alighted on a branch on the campus at 1720 S. 29th st. Upper. Becker, a member of the faculty at Milwaukee Lutheran Teachers college, smoked bees into the hive. **Right:** Honey bees swarmed on a branch as it was held over the hive. Becker lives at 2401 N. Grant Blvd.



Swedish Tribute to Dr. Siegbert W. Becker

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LUTHERSKT SÄNDEBREV

Konst och anordning utförda av PER JONSSON

Nr 7 September 1964, Årg. 12

Siegbert W. Becker

Siegbert W. Becker har efter en tids svår sjukdom avsnöat i Heren. Det skedde en vecka före Lutherska Bekännelsekyrkans tolvårigd.

Ännu så sent som i våras hoppades vi att Becker och hans hustru skulle vara närvarande vid detta tillfälle. Men det ingick inte i Guds planer.

Ingem hade ännars varit så självskriven som gåt vid tolvårigderna som Becker. Särilt minnaktort kan följa, hade vi inte haft någon bekräftelse på att Becker fått bli ett Guds utvalde råskap.

Hur kunde det då komma sig, att denne professor vid Wisconsinens presbiterianerna borra i Medelvästern kom till Skandinavien och som frukt av sin fortjänade fick se hur en bekännelsekyrka väste framåt? Det var läroämnet av erfarenhet, mer än på rätt ställe fick sin Heren när på ett hundrade sjålar. Underända av den sprivalling, som dillits bildats dem, det samma livet ord. Han linc bara åter ett värlig svar på över från en oland maktat i Sverige, han gav sig också till att fram och ända över ett par föredrag, som han hållit. Dessa blev så småningom överens och utgjva under titelarna "Lagens tredje bruk".

(numera utkastad) och "Den Heliga Skrifts värdeinspiration". På inbjudan av Sveriges Biblicum kom han sommaren 1972 till Sverige som gästföreläsare. Hans föreläsningar kom sedan ut i bokform, "Skriften och Sägelsen". Innan Bekännelsekyrkan bildades utkom boken "Lutherska Bekännelsekyrka". Här medverkade också Becker med uppsatsen "Varför jag älskade Missourisyndoden". När sedan kyrkan höll sin första årskonferens i Yxehult 1975 medverkade Becker med en predikan på svenska. Han hade nämligen åren dertillföran lart sig svenska språket för att bättre kunna hålla kontakt med Sverige.

Med många av Bekännelsekyrkans medlemmar fick Becker under åren nära personliga kontakter, både med äldre och yngre. Mycket möda hade han när på teor inom Wisconsinensyndodens föreningar för att väcka intresset för arbetet i Skandinavien.

En Heren i föreningen har nu fått ämnas sin Heren i Heren för lovsången för Lammets tron. Därför är det på sin plats att anföra ett ord av Daniel 12:3:

Men återarna skall lysa som stjärnor i himlen och de som har fört de många till rättfärdighet, såsom stjärnor alltid och evinnligen.

The homegoing of this well known orthodox Lutheran professor, pastor, scholar, and man of God on September 1 was deeply felt not only in Lutheran confessional circles in America but also in Sweden. Dr. Becker had frequently visited both Sweden and Norway and had otherwise exerted much effort to assist the fledgling Lutheran Confessional Church in Sweden and Norway during its first decade. Following are tributes to Dr. Becker in the September issue of Lutherskt Sändebrev, monthly publication of the LCC.

First, Dr. Becker's last letter of greeting to the church, dated August 14, addressed to Pastor Per Jonsson, church leader and editor, and the members of the LCC:

"Dear Brothers:

"I had hoped to be able to write you personally to express my great joy over the 10th anniversary of the Lutheran Confessional Church. But I am so weak that this is not possible. Therefore, I am asking Helen to write these lines to express my gratitude to God and to all of you, and particularly Kjerstin Jonsson, for the fact that these 10 years have been so significant for the work of confessional Lutheranism in Sweden, Norway, Finland and on into Germany.

"God bless you all and give us all His grace, that we might all meet in Heaven.

"Affectionately,
Sig Becker"

Kjerstin Jonsson, the wife of Pastor Jonsson, translated into Swedish many articles and booklets from Luther's shorter writings, and many articles of American origin and Lutheran confessional content, among them Dr. Becker's articles and booklets and various articles from Christian News. For the past few years, emphysema and related illnesses have prevented her from doing any further such work.

A black-bordered announcement of Dr. Becker's death and a tribute to him and his work appeared on the front page of Sändebrev as follows:

SIEGBERT W. BECKER

After a lengthy illness Siegbert W. Becker has fallen asleep in the Lord. This occurred one week prior to our 10th anniversary celebration in the Lutheran Confessional Church.

As late as this spring we had hoped that Becker and his wife might participate in this anniversary event, but this did not fit into the Lord's plans.

No one else would have been so fitting a guest at our 10th anniversary as Becker. As far as human reckoning goes, we would have had no Lutheran Confessional Church if Becker had not become God's chosen instrument.

How could it have come about this professor at the Wisconsin Synod seminary clear off there in the American Midwest came to Scandinavia and witnessed how a confessional church body could grow and develop on the good foundation he laid? Here was nothing of a "conqueror's mentality." Instead, here was a man with his heart in the right place and with concern for the glory of God who gave hungry souls malnourished by the pap which had been offered them, the true, living Word instead. Not only did he write a friendly reply to a letter from a complete stranger in Sweden, but he also gave of his time to dig up and send over several lectures which he had held. Little by little these were collected and translated and issued under the titles *Lagens tredje bruk* (Third Use of the Law), now sold out, and *The Verbal Inspiration of Holy Scripture*.

In the summer of 1972 the Biblicum Foundation invited him to come to Sweden as a guest lecturer. His lectures later came out in book form as *Skriften och Sägelsen* (Scripture and Salvation). When the Lutheran Confessional Church was founded a book was issued with the same title as the new church name. Becker contributed to this with an article on "Why I Left the Missouri Synod." When the new church held its first annual convention in Yxehult in 1975, Becker preached — in Swedish. During the previous year he had taught himself the Swedish language in order to further and strengthen his contacts in Sweden.

During the years Becker developed close personal contacts with many of the members of the LCC, both young and old. He exerted much effort traveling to congregations and gatherings of the Wisconsin Synod in order to awaken interest in the work in Scandinavia.

And so a teacher in the congregation has laid down his teaching office to take up the song of praise before the throne of the Lamb. It is therefore appropriate to cite this word from Daniel 12:3:

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Translator's note: In the Swedish Bible and in some other languages, including Luther's German Bible, the opening words of Daniel 12:3 are translated "But the teachers shall shine. . .")

Finally, a brief essay, evidently a lecture given by Dr. Becker on one of his visits to Sweden and now published in his memory, entitled

WITH CHRIST IN HEAVEN.

When I was a boy we had a neighbor who used to make fun of what was said in the Bible. One day I heard him say to his father: "If there is a heaven, is it beyond this world or where is it? It must be farther than the furthest stars. But the stars are millions of light years from us, and even if the soul could be transported with the speed of light, it would take the soul millions of years to get there."

For a long time thereafter I found this question a major stumbling block. I had always believed that heaven was somewhere beyond the stars, but up till now I had never troubled myself with the question of how long it would take the soul to get there. I did not doubt that the soul could travel with the speed of light and faster, but I was not certain that it could get beyond the stars in one day, even though I knew that the dying robber's soul was in Paradise the same day he died (Luke 23:43).

Paul tells us that we shall meet the Lord "in the air" (I Thessalonians 4:17). How far must we travel in order to meet the Lord? The Lord is everywhere. If our eyes could be opened as the eyes of Elijah's servant were opened, we should see not only the angels who are all around us but also the Lord with us here and now. And the Savior says concerning the angels in heaven who watch over the children: "For I say to you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). The angels are with us here in this room, yet at the same time they are always in heaven. For to come to heaven it is not necessary for us to travel a long way when we die. If only the veil were lifted from our eyes, even we ourselves would stand — as one

day we shall stand — before God as the angels do and see our Savior in all His glory.

The Bible does not say as much about the condition of the soul after death. What we know with certainty is that those who have died in Christ will be blessed and happy and shall live and reign with Him, while those who have died in disobedience and unbelief shall be "in prison (1 Peter 3:19-20) and tormented.

It is foolish and unnecessary to pray for the souls of the dead. Many make a big issue out of this by insisting that the Lutheran confessions recommend prayers for the dead. On

Photographed from the February 7, 1965 NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN.

Why I Joined the Wisconsin Synod

A little more than a year ago, I was privileged by the grace of God to become a member of the Wisconsin Synod.

If I am asked why I chose to sever for almost a half century, to which I owed so much both in a material and spiritual way, and where I had learned to know my Savior, and why I chose to affiliate myself with a much smaller and poorer church body, I can only reply that I joined the Wisconsin Synod because it was important to me to be a member of a church in which my own faith was not assailed constantly by men who outwardly passed as brethren but who, by denying the inerrancy of Scripture and other fundamental doctrines of the church, were tearing down the foundations on which all Christian faith



Dr. Siegbert Becker

must rest, namely, the words and promises of God. All of us, pastors, professors and laymen alike, must "walk in danger all the way," and everything that undermines the authority of the Scriptures makes it more difficult to cling to the promises of salvation that we have in Christ. As I was sure that I would, I found in the Wisconsin Synod a group of fellow Christians who, by their steadfast loyalty to the Word of God and by their clear, firm, and courageous confession of its inspiration and infallibility, have been a source of strength and edification to me in my own spiritual life. I did not expect to find a perfect church, for all of us will remain sinners until we die, but I did expect to find a church which by God's mercy has not followed the modern drift away from the moorings of the Word. In this hope I was not disappointed.

I joined the Wisconsin Synod also for the sake of my children. I wanted them to hear the kind of preaching and teaching that I had heard in my own youth, when I belonged to a church that faithfully and loyally proclaimed the whole counsel of God, that vigorously

the basis of the highly parenthetical reference to "prayers for the dead, which are not forbidden" these people attempt to show that it is a good practice to pray for the souls of the dead. First and foremost we must maintain that the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, where these words are written, at no point says exactly what is meant by "prayers for the dead." After the Lutheran confessions renounce all thought of any purgatory, it becomes clear that they have not set forth what is customarily meant by "prayers for the dead." We may offer our prayers of thanksgiving for the blessed dead, praising them and thanking God for His mercy when they have ended their lives here on earth and gone home — but to say more than this cannot be done without departing from the firm foundation of Holy Scripture.

This life is our time of grace. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation," II Corinthians 6:2. Knowing this should help us to "redeem the time" (Ephesians 5:16), to "buy time" in which to use this life righteously, as a preparation for the life to come. In this spirit we need to turn again and again to our Savior as the only One in whom we can find forgiveness and the promise of everlasting life in Him. And when we have reached certainly concerning the full and free forgiveness of all our sins through the Lord's blood, His suffering, His death and His resurrection, we can with confidence and hope look forward with calmness and joy to that day when our soul shall be required of us (Luke 12:20). In this faith we can sing with the hymn writer:

O blessed day, O blessed hour for me
When I shall bid farewell
From this world, when God shall take me to Him
And gather home my soul!
He shall send His angels
To bear me by the hand
To the promised land of Heaven
From the land of my tears.

To be with Christ shall be far better, even if for a time we must leave this body which is so wondrously made, and which we shall be sure to miss when we must depart from it; for it, too, is God's gift, given to us for our happiness. But the day shall come when our body shall again be awakened and shall have a share in that joy without end which shall be ours in our Savior's presence. God give us all such joy! Amen.

(Translator: Pastor Edward A. Johnson, Lincoln, Nebraska.)

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN.

opposed all error, and that stood four square on the impermeable rock of Holy Writ. These are times in which our young people are assailed by attacks on Scripture from every side, and if the church to which they belong joins the world in casting doubt on the Word of our God, how can they stand firm? You cannot fill the Bible full of question marks and attack the historicity of the revelation of God by relegating large portions of the Bible to the realm of myth and legend and still expect that our young people will become firm believers in Christ and faithful confessors of the Word. I wanted my children to have the privilege of growing up in a church where by word and example they would be made aware of the supreme and infallible authority of that Book by which we are taught to cling to Jesus Christ, without whom there is no living hope and no sure salvation.

Finally, I joined the Wisconsin Synod because I was convinced that it was my duty to give aid and support to a church which supported the principles of the Lutheran Reformation. This duty was implied in the vow that I took at my confirmation. I believe that the future of true Lutheranism in the world rests with the Wisconsin Synod and with those still smaller Lutheran groups which have not surrendered to the ecumania and the false scholarship of our time. Voices are heard on every side telling us that unless we come to terms with modern scholarship and accommodate ourselves to the "assured results" of modern scientific investigation, we cannot hope to have a theology which is "relevant" to modern life. But this siren song was already old when we were young. A hundred years ago it was said by apostate Lutherans that a church which held the theological position of the old Synodical Conference could not possibly hope to flourish in the free climate of America. But the Synodical Conference in those days became a veritable fortress of orthodox Lutheranism.

Today the old Synodical Conference is no more, and the Wisconsin Synod stands almost alone in the world as one of the few Lutheran church bodies which in a united fashion still defends and confesses orthodox Lutheranism. It is my conviction that in the years to come it will be the Wisconsin Synod that will speak the strengthening Word to those faithful souls in other Lutheran bodies who are grieved for the affliction of Zion and who need the encouragement of true brethren in the faith. It was my hope that I might in a small way help the Wisconsin Synod speak that Word to a world that needs it.

By their courageous action and their clear confession, the members of the Wisconsin Synod have compelled me to recognize them as my brethren in the true Lutheran faith. Here is where I belong. I know that they can help me. I hope that I can help them. And by the grace of God, together we will help Lutheranism, and the world. God grant it! Amen.

SIEGBERT BECKER

Real Christian Comfort in Death

A Great Champion of God's Truth Goes to Heaven

With the death on September 1 of Dr. Siegbert Becker, one of the Twentieth Century's finest Greek scholars, theologian, and teacher, all of Christendom has lost a great champion of God's truth.

We have asked Rev. Phillip Giesler, the executive secretary of *An American Translation* of the Bible, and a former student of Dr. Becker, to send us an article on Dr. Becker. Pastor Giesler has been in regular contact with Dr. Becker in recent months. Dr. Becker, Dr. Robert Hoerber of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and some other scholars have been working on a revision of the AAT, under Giesler's direction. Dr. Becker read through the AAT several times, at least once aloud. Becker had almost completed his work on the AAT at the time of his death. He did finish his commentary on the book of Revelation which is now at the publisher. We promised Dr. Becker we would review it as soon as we received a copy.

CN has published a good number of the essays of Dr. Becker. Some of them are included in the *Christian Handbook on Vital Issues* and *The Christian News Encyclopedia*. Titles of some of the essays are "The State of the Soul After Death," "Observing the Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel in the Preaching and Teaching Ministry," "A Look at Pentecostalism," "Existentialism - What Is It?," "REV - Shall We?," and "The Bearing of the Variant Readings on the Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Holy Scripture."

Dr. Becker's grasp of the Greek New Testament was almost incredible. We listened in awe as we heard him comment on fine points of Greek grammar during a meeting of scholars working on the AAT. We'll never forget one four hour conference call when several of us, including the late Dr. Martin Scharlemann, were seeking to strengthen the AAT. We were thrilled that these two great scholars, who had been in opposition years before, could work so harmoniously together on the AAT as they shared their insights.

Dr. Becker was not only a great scholar but a Christian gentleman, husband and father, and, according to the testimony of many students, one of Lutheranism's best teachers. He was a man of many interests, including keeping bees and fishing. When he

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Testament and the overall English Bible, a superb teacher of dogmatics and exegesis, an extremely knowledgeable church historian and gifted preacher. But topping all of these precious gifts was his ability to communicate those truths of God's Word in a way that this writer has never seen in another. Becker was masterful in the use of illustrations, in giving examples from life and ministry, and in making comparisons with the modern settings. His communicative techniques, such as leaving the ends off of sentences, has kept many a confirmation child awake and alert over the years. He made systematics thrilling and exegesis breathtaking. To hear him describe the term "justification," the true way of conversion, the error of synergism, or the Roman Catholic way of salvation (the *gratia donum superadditum ladder*) was to sit in awe, never to forget, and to desire to get out and teach others.

Four Significant Contributions

The first of these contributions is that implied above. Dr. Becker has trained an army that will carry the Gospel to the next generation for her Savior.

For the past eleven years Dr. Becker was most active in helping to stabilize the Confessional Lutheran Church (CLC) in Sweden, along with his dear friend Decent Seth Erlandsson. In 1977, as liaison between the WELS and the CLC, Becker spent three months lecturing in Sweden and Norway and helping to establish a seminary program in Uppsala. His plans to assist in the translation of a new Swedish Bible was not fulfilled and will fall to other servants of Christ.

A third contribution concerns all the works Becker published. He penned a *Survey of the Old Testament* while at River Forest. More recently he wrote *Wizards That Peep - A Journey Into the Occult* as well as a "musings" reading for the serious theologian, namely, *The Foolishness of God - The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther*. A work that has long been needed in Lutheran circles will appear around Christmas of this year. It is a commentary on Revelation. (These latter three works can be obtained from Northwestern Publishing House in Milwaukee.)

The Thorough Revision of the AAT

Dr. Becker's final contribution concerns the efforts and results of this his last year. As revision editor of *The Holy Bible: An American Translation* (AAT), this writer approached Dr. Robert Hoerber to begin work on the New Testament portion of the project. Hoerber of Concordia Seminary - St. Louis asked me to ask Becker to join him in the initial evaluations of the entire text. Becker agreed and together these two Greek experts formed a duo that between them realized 75 years of Greek teaching experience on the college level. For the past ten months both have combed the books, offering many improvements to a Bible that already had potential galore because of its original author's goals and abilities. (The AAT is affectionately known as the "Beck Bible" because of its original translator, Dr. Wm. F. Beck.)

Becker, for example, read the entire New Testament through three times as he examined the translation. He did two things of significance. First he checked all passages used in *Luther's Catechism* (as they were marked in the AAT text) and he adjusted them for ease of memorization by children (and of course on the basis of the Greek). The third time through Becker read the whole New Testament aloud to improve its reading for pulpit and lecture usage. (In a subsequent issue of *Christian News*, we shall give you, the reader, an initial sample of some of Becker's final work for your spiritual nourishment and enjoyment.)

During some of his last days Dr. Becker struggled on the phone (in spite of his discomforts) to finish Romans and



Dr. and Mrs. Siegbert Becker

was asked to do some lecturing in Sweden in his later years, he learned to speak in Swedish in order that he would not have to work through an interpreter. This fall he was scheduled to teach in Sweden.

The editor of *Christian News* particularly owes Dr. Becker a debt of gratitude. We first met him some 25 years ago when together with Professor Kurt Marquart, now a professor at Concordia Seminary, Ft. Wayne, we visited him at The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, Illinois. We shared our concerns about the teachings of various professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Dr. Becker later agreed to serve as a counselor along with Professor Marquart and Rev. H. Walter Niewald, pastor of our neighboring sister congregation, in our case with Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Dr. Becker came to St. Louis on three different occasions for a series of hearings pertaining to the case. There he heard for himself what some LCMS seminary professors were teaching. There were very few LCMS professors in 1959 who would have served as a counselor in this case. The St. Louis seminary

AAT BIBLE VERSIONS COMMITTEE MEETS IN NEW HAVEN

Left to right: Kneeling: Phillip Giesler, Peter Prange, Larry Margardt, Rudolf Homay, Ren Beck, Stauding; Erich Kleh, Horace Hummel, Robert Hoerber, and Siegbert Becker. Missing, Raymond Surburg, and Herman Otten.



"The longer we work at the revision of the AAT the more I understand Luther's comment that it was hard to make the prophets speak German, and the more I realize what a monumental piece of work Dr. Beck did. I only hope that our work of revision will make a good translation better." Dr. Siegbert Becker.

Hebrews and Galatians. What a team he and Hoerber made as they compared each other's work over the months and made final recommendations! (The New Testament portion of the AAT revision is now in the hands of eight final readers from various seminaries and parishes of the ELS, LCMS, and WELS. It should make its appearance as a separate entity early in 1985 during the continuing 450th anniversary of Luther's translation of the German Bible.)

The reader will stand in awe of Dr. Becker's dedication and way with words in the upcoming AAT revision. The truth of his Savior's work dances in Romans and the rest of the New Testament. Becker also roughed out the tiny summaries of each New Testament epistle which will appear as the initial footnotes in each book.

We Remember

Those of us who studied under this great servant of our Lord Jesus and loved his instruction all remember that his eyes, thoughts, and words were ultimately always fixed on heaven, the place where he would be with his Jesus forever. And we remember the urgency in his voice and teaching to get heaven's message out and of arriving there personally ourselves, just as he now has.

Dr. Becker's whole life and ministry said: "God be glorified!" And we say: "Thank you Lord Jesus for sharing your message with us through Dr. Becker in such an impressive and convincing way."

Daniel 12:3 tells us that those who lead many to the Christian faith will shine in glory as the stars in the sky. And today another very bright star has joined the Kingdom of Glory.

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faculty was not pleased with Dr. Becker for serving as our counselor. The faculty and top officials of the LCMS tried to give the impression that we were the only one concerned about theological liberalism at Concordia Seminary.

Even before his participation in this case, Dr. Becker had been concerned that various liberal LCMS professors were not being disciplined by officials. Dr. Becker tried his best in a kindly way to get the leaders of the LCMS to practice evangelical discipline. Dr. Becker took a stand against the liberals and for God's truth at a time when some other LCMS conservatives were waiting to see whether conservatives had enough support to defeat the liberals.

Dr. Becker was one of CN's most faithful supporters during the years he was still a member of the LCMS. He was one of the few LCMS professors who regularly helped CN not only with his writings but also financially. While some other conservative LCMS professors and officials hesitated to take a public stand against liberalism when the liberals were in control of the LCMS, Dr. Becker took a courageous stand for the truth.

After several years of attempting to get LCMS officials to practice evangelical doctrinal discipline, Dr. Becker left the LCMS and joined the Wisconsin Lutheran Evangelical Synod. His stand for the truth was costly. He left a good position.

Dr. Becker thought that the time had come for conservatives within the LCMS to leave their church, which was rapidly being taken over by the liberals, regardless of the consequences. However, unlike some other conservatives who left the LCMS, Dr. Becker did not become bitter toward those of his friends who remained within the LCMS in order to inform others about the liberalism within the LCMS and who felt that there still was a chance with God's help to restore orthodoxy and get the liberals removed from the LCMS.

He did rejoice when eventually many of the professors he had warned LCMS officials about did leave the LCMS. He was rightly concerned, however, that some of the liberal professors were forced out of the LCMS not on the basis of their liberal theology but because they are supposed to have violated some man made regulations. He wrote us in 1977: "Believe me when I say that we, or at least I, have no desire to remain separate from Missouri for one day longer than necessary. But until the LCMS begins to operate with Scripture rather than by-laws, there is no hope for reconciliation no matter how many moderates are forced out on constitutional grounds" ("Down With the 'By-Law Mentality'" *Christian News Encyclopedia*, p. 1710).

Dr. Becker hoped that the day would come when the WELS and LCMS could again be in fellowship. He regretted that unfortunately even within the LCMS some conservatives have "bought the new fellowship principles." He warned that a good statement on Holy Scripture that is joined with an obvious reluctance to practice doctrinal discipline is not sufficient. He noted that political maneuvering to remove a few key figures is not a substitute for doctrinal discipline. He rejoiced that the LCMS had taken a turn to the right, but added that it still had a long road to travel before it could be considered a truly orthodox church body.

Some LCMS conservatives were disappointed that Dr. Becker did not accept an invitation to speak at a conference sponsored by an LCMS group. Dr. Becker told us that he wanted to go very badly and said he would have lectured if the program was not opened with a common devotion. He did not want to give his good friends in the LCMS the impression that it is permissible to have altar, pulpit and prayer fellowship with those who teach false doctrine. Too many conservatives in the LCMS are quite willing to worship with liberals in the LCMS and elsewhere who deny basic truths of God's word. Dr. Becker wanted us to know this in the event we criticized the WELS for being "standoffish" in the matter.

The next issues of CN will include an essay Dr. Becker wrote on Heaven and Hell. Here is real Christian comfort for his family and all those who experience the loss of a loved one. Sig Becker knew that he was a sinner and never relied on his life or his great scholarship for eternal salvation. His hope of heaven was based only upon the merits of Jesus Christ. Read his "Heaven and Hell" in the next issues of CN.



Dr. Siegbert Becker giving a fishing lesson at Camp Trinity, New Haven, Mo.

New Look Urged at Abortion Laws

By JAMES M. JOHNSTON
Sentinel Religion Editor

"OUR ABORTION laws are mad and medieval, although even in the Middle Ages no congress of women would have passed them."

The speaker was the campus pastor at the University of Illinois, the Rev. Benjamin Garrison, arguing on the floor of the general conference of the United Methodist Church at St. Louis last month. Garrison said, incidentally, that he had been asked to arrange four abortions in one month.

Though the average spokesman is more temperate, the tone of Garrison's talk on American criminal abortion laws is harmonizing with an increasing number of sounds in legislative and judicial halls.

More religious groups, too, are urging a new look at abortion laws, and thus striking discords in the Catholic-Protestant ecumenism.

ROMAN CATHOLIC opinion remains opposed to any proposals that would make abortions easier to obtain. They hold with Tertullian and St. Gregory of Nyssa that creation of the soul and creation of life with conception are simultaneous, and that destruction of a soul is murder.

Roman Catholics in Wisconsin have been especially active against moves to liberalize abortion since the recent decision by three federal judges that declared unconstitutional a part of the state's law. The ruling, in effect, permitted abortion during the first four months of pregnancy, or during the period in which the fetus is "quickened."

Shortly after Garrison's talk, the United Methodists adopted a resolution urging states to remove regulation of abortion from the criminal code and place it "under regulations relating to other procedures of standard medical practice," and to make abortion available only upon request of the person "most directly concerned."

IN BOLD VENTURES into the most controversial and emotionally packed "social action" area that religious bodies have dared to enter since World War II, two other denominations will soon air abortion arguments. They are the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., meeting this week and next at Chicago, and the Lutheran Church in America, meeting next month in Minneapolis. Both denominations will be asked to approve liberalization of abortion laws.

Roman Catholicism recently counted an unusual ally in its fight against abortion. He was the Rev. Siebert W. Becker, a Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod professor at the denomination's seminary in Mequon.

In an article in the Jan. 4 Northwestern Lutheran, Becker quoted not St. Augustine, not Tertullian, not St. Gregory, but the New Testament.

He cited the Gospel of Luke, which tells of the visit of Mary, mother-to-be of Jesus, to her cousin, Elizabeth, to whom would be born John the Baptist. Luke's account says that when Elizabeth heard the voice of Mary, "the babe leaped in her womb."

Becker continued, "The evangelist then goes on to tell us that Elizabeth, speaking under the influence of the Holy Ghost, said, 'As soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.'"

"Elizabeth spoke these words several months prior to the birth of John," Becker wrote. "Yet her words clearly speak of John as a real person, who rejoiced over the coming birth of the Son of God."

Becker contended that this

viewed it as a technique in population control.

"We do not think that abortion should be relied upon as a means of limiting family size," says the Presbyterian report to be considered at Chicago. "Contraceptive procedures are more desirable for many and obvious reasons."

"But when through misinformation, miscalculation, technical failure, or other reasons, contraception fails and an unwanted pregnancy is established, we do not think it either compassionate or just to insist that available help be withheld."

The Lutheran Church in America stance, included in a general position paper that has already become controversial called "Sex, Marriage and Family" says:

"In the consideration of induced abortion the key issue is the status of the unborn fetus. Since the fetus is the organic beginning of human life, the termination of its development is always a serious matter. Nevertheless, a qualitative distinction must be made between its claims and the rights of a responsible person made in God's image who is in living relationships with God and other human beings. The understanding of responsible personhood is congruent with the historical Lutheran teaching and practice whereby only living persons are baptized."

"ON THE BASIS of the evangelical ethic, a woman or couple may decide responsibly to seek an abortion. Earnest consideration should be given to the life and total health of the mother, her responsibilities to others in her family, the stage of development of the fetus, the economic and psychological stability of the home, the laws of the land and the consequences for society as a whole.

"Persons considering abor-

tion are encouraged to consult with their physicians and spiritual counselors. This church upholds its pastors and other responsible counselors and persons who conscientiously make decisions about abortion."

The Presbyterian report, produced by the Department of Church and Society, is also included in a broader paper. Titled "Sexuality and the Human Community," this report discusses, in addition to abortion, subjects like sex education, dating, homosexuality, contraception, courtship and marriage, courtship and race and sterilization.

It asks the general assembly to declare "that termination of pregnancy in the case of a nonviable fetus is a per-

sonal matter between the patient and her physician and therefore should not be restricted by law," and to conduct further study about what constitutes a viable fetus.

THE REPORT argues:

"Abortion of a nonviable fetus should be taken out of the realm of the law altogether and be made a matter of the careful ethical decision of a woman, her physician and her pastor or other counselor."

Nothing that the Old Testament does not equate feticide with homicide and disputing the theory that the soul enters the fetus upon conception, the report rejects as insufficient the position that abortion should be permitted

only when the mother's life is endangered. It also considers subsequent liberalizations of the laws too conservative.

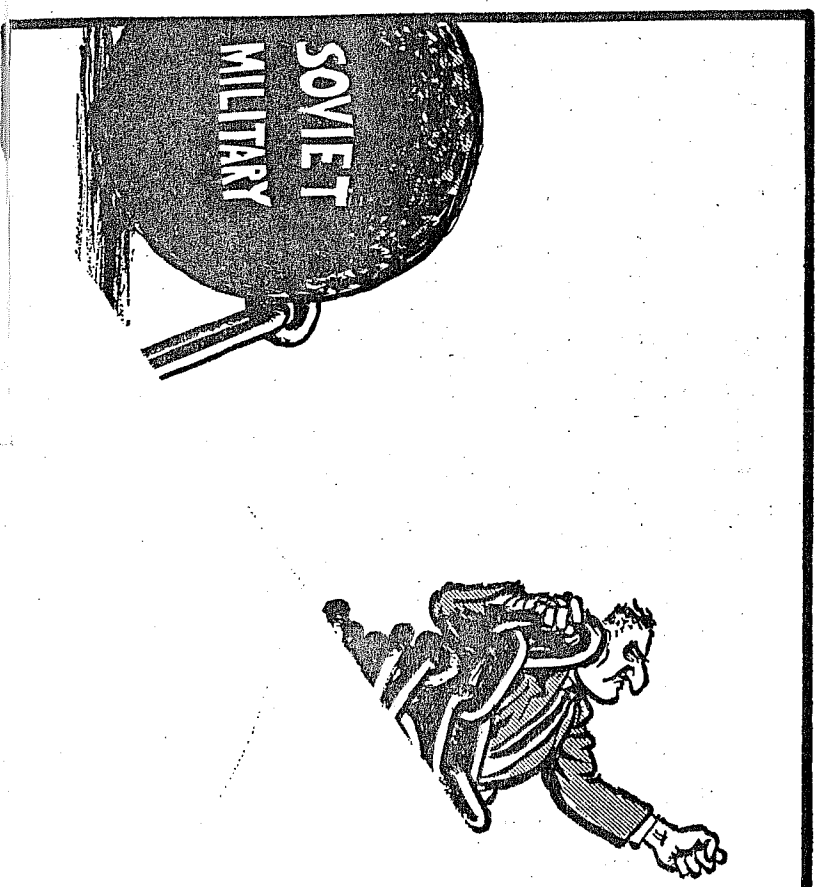
The report complains that these positions leave the law as the final arbiter of proper medical practice, denies the mother the right not to bear an unwanted child and "does not allow for consideration of the emotional, social or economic welfare of other members of the family into which an unwanted child may be born."

"It does nothing to affect the problem of illegal abortions, a major socio-medical disease, which leaves an important moral and medical problem to be solved by criminals, quack practitioners and a handful of reputable physi-

cians who are willing to risk their practices and their reputations to perform this procedure...."

No doubt the Illinois campus pastor is right about the wishes of a medieval congress of women, if such a gathering were thinkable in the days before liberation of either men and women.

But they probably would not have made a social issue of it. For the sexual permissiveness of our day, though not unknown to the ladies in Balzac and Rabella's, had yet to win the "respectability" which even some of today's liberal church committees have given it. Consequently, their abortion statistics did not approach the totals of our day.



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