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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

PROFESSOR WERNER ELERT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

According to a report in the *Informationsdienst* of VELKD (January 1955), the first volume of the *Agende fuer evangelisch-lutherische Kirchen und Gemeinden* was approved by the General Synod on October 13, 1954. Its adoption was preceded by a number of addresses by prominent Lutheran theologians on various subjects relative to Lutheran public worship. Dr. Elert's remarks touched on the importance of the sermon in the Lutheran service. Refuting the thoughts, often expressed, that in public worship the sermon has become obsolete as also Luther's emphasis on preaching as the chief part of congregational worship, he stressed the fact that in the ancient church preaching was considered as a necessary part of public instruction. Strictly speaking, it was not a constituent of the liturgical service, but something essentially independent of it. In the sermon the church appears in its function as teacher. Here it has something to say which it cannot entrust to the general instruction in religion nor to the special instruction of the youth (*Christenlehre*), since in the pulpit it offers to Christians something of which the older members cannot say that they learned that long ago. Luther's remark in his "pulpit prayer" is true: "The poor people are in need of instruction." That is the Lutheran conception of the sermon: it ranks above the liturgy. In Romanism the church still appears as the teacher. But that is true only of the clergy, which is separated from the people. By its doctrine of the *fides implicita* the laity must believe what the church teaches. But Lutheranism holds that the laity must *know* what the church teaches. This function of the sermon dare not be surrendered.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Religion in Life features in its spring number a symposium on the topic "The One Church and Our Many Churches." Professor T. A. Kantonen of Hamma Divinity School is one of the contributors. His analysis of the ecumenical movement in its relation to the denominations appears to us to be so penetrating and sober that we are taking the privilege of submitting the conclusion of his argument, which he expresses in the final paragraph. This reads in part:

"The ecumenical movement today is on the way to this unity [a unity of the Spirit]. But the pace appears to some to be so slow that drastic accelerative measures are needed. . . . Schemes of union born out of well-meaning but shortsighted impatience may perform a . . . disservice to the emerging unity of the church. The one church, in the fullest sense, completely free from tensions and divisions, will indeed remain a transcendent norm and an object of faith as long as the life of the church is bound to the concrete particularities of history. The attempt to override historical reality will result only in a crippled ecumenicity. Resisting the temptation to concentrate on the rearrangement of externals, let the church follow the path to true unity by seeking greater depth in the knowledge of her Lord, sensitive to the Spirit, who makes Christ a living reality to his people and binds the hearts of believers together in love."

P. M. B.

BISHOP HANNS LILJE ON PREACHING

When on October 13, 1954, the first volume of the new agenda for Lutheran churches was adopted by the German General Synod, also Dr. Lilje spoke on the significance of the sermon in public worship. He began his discussion by saying that he is a liturgist *par excellence* (*durch und durch ein Liturg*) and that he loves everything that is connected with the liturgy of the Christian Church. At the same time he heartily supported what Dr. Elert had said on the importance of preaching. It is a moment of darkness (*ein dunkler Augenblick*) when it is said in the Lutheran Church that the period of preaching is past. The Lutheran Church ceases to exist when it becomes uncertain with regard to the prominent position of preaching. There is nothing more improper (*weltfremd*) than the statement that the period of preaching lies in the past. The church which no longer can expect of God the *exousia* to spread the Gospel *docendo*, is no longer Lutheran. We may deplore that in matters pertaining to liturgy too much has been left to the arbitrary decision of pastors. That must be abolished and order restored. But we must deplore it still more that in our church the function of the sermon has been so greatly obscured. That is not the fault of the liturgists, but it is intimately connected with the unique development of our scientific theology. If this is its practical result that the preacher enters the pulpit without knowing what to say as a teacher of the church, then we face a calamity which we must take most seriously. A church without the power to proclaim the Christian message in such a way that the world can understand it must pray for a reformation.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Vienna.—"Free and One Through Christ Alone" will be the theme of the third assembly of the Lutheran World Federation to be held in the United States in August 1957. The theme was selected by the Federation's executive committee, which met here. In a call to member churches to attend the assembly, the committee asked that they suggest related subthemes for the various sections of the meeting. In so doing the committee emphasized that every phase of church life is influenced by unity and freedom.

The National Lutheran Council was assigned the task of determining the assembly site. Mentioned as possibilities, however, were Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and Purdue University in Lafayette, Ind. Present at the assembly will be 275 official delegates, 100 official visitors from member churches, 100 visitors from non member churches, 25 from denominational and interdenominational ecumenical bodies, and some representatives from youth groups.

The executive committee also decided to hold its next meeting in Madras, India, in January 1956, coinciding with celebrations there of the 250th anniversary of Lutheran mission work in India.

Washington, D. C.—The United States opposes any change in the present calendar, the State Department said in a note to Dag Hammarskjöld, secretary general of the United Nations. A new world calendar, proposed by India, has been referred to member nations for study by the UN. The State Department said that any further study of the proposal would "serve no useful purpose." The new calendar has been strongly opposed by some religious groups because it would mean that the Sabbath would keep shifting. The plan divides the year into four equal quarters, each having two months of 30 days and one of 31 days. The last day of the year and, in leap years, the day following June 30 would be called "white" days and would not be part of any week or month. Thus any given date would fall on the same day of the week every year. The State Department said it would not be appropriate for the UN to sponsor any calendar change conflicting with the principles of important religious faiths.

"This Government," it said, "further recommends that no further study of this subject should be undertaken. Such a study would require use of manpower and funds which would be more useful devoted to more vital and urgent tasks."

The State Department's action was praised in New York by Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, president of the League for the Safeguarding of the Fixity of the Sabbath. He said his organization recently had pre-

sented a petition against the proposed calendar change to Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr. Reuben R. Figuhr, international president of the Seventh-Day Adventists, recently asked the State Department to oppose the new calendar. He said the change would "definitely disturb the religious program of many Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans, and bring economic distress and inconvenience to employer and employee alike."

Hartford, Conn. — Pastors of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod in Connecticut went on record here against any liberalizing of gambling laws by the state legislature. The denomination's Connecticut Valley Pastoral Conference, composed of 30 pastors, also opposed the "use of the church as a means of trying to get the gambling laws liberalized."

"The church does not want or need such laws for its sacred work," the conference said.

Chicago. — Public schools must create a climate favorable to the development of individual religious commitments nurtured in the home and church. This conclusion was reached by a study group at the 10th annual meeting here of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), a department of the National Education Association.

Examining the problem of teaching religion in the public schools, the group also agreed:

1. The issue is becoming increasingly critical.
2. The public school has a responsibility for developing moral and spiritual values but cannot teach sectarianism.
3. The school is responsible for teaching about religion as an essential aspect of our culture.
4. There is need for increased intercommunication among all concerned agencies: church, school, and home.

The group recommended that the ASCD give "considerable" attention to the matter of teaching religion in the public schools by "co-operating with other agencies; for example, the National School Boards Association" and by "conducting action research into practices in school communities."

Preparation of teachers for their roles in religious education and the implementation in actual practices of teaching about religion were cited by the group as some of the "more critical problem areas."

Some 3,000 educators attended the meeting, which tackled a wide range of school problems.

Washington, D.C.—A Lutheran official challenged a recent statement by Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam of Washington that reports of widespread immorality among GI's abroad are grossly exaggerated. Dr. Carl F. Yaeger, associate secretary of the Lutheran Service Commission, said he and other churchmen who had toured overseas military areas had found unwholesome moral conditions there. The Commission is a co-operative agency of the National Lutheran Council and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Bishop Oxnam made his remarks late last month after he had returned from a tour of U.S. bases in Germany.

Dr. Yaeger, a former Navy chaplain, had previously criticized moral conditions in Army life abroad in a report to the annual meeting of the National Lutheran Council. Replying to Bishop Oxnam, he stood by his statements and said they had been "confirmed by many reliable observers." Dr. Yaeger noted that Bishop F. Otto Dibelius, head of the Evangelical Church in Germany, had suggested to the U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains late last year that "we co-operate to raise the moral tone of two areas in the American Zone." He also said that members of a delegation of churchmen who visited the Far East and European commands last summer reported on the "appalling immorality in Oriental communities."

Dr. Yaeger's views were supported by Dr. Paul C. Empie, executive director of the National Lutheran Council, who returned recently from a trip to Europe during which he inspected the new Lutheran Service Center at Kaiserslautern, Germany. Dr. Empie told of visiting the "dark back streets" of Kaiserslautern, where, he said, "one could see Americans in uniform slipping in and out of buildings where unwholesome or worse activities went on behind heavily curtained windows." The NLC director said the Evangelical bishop of the area recently issued "a stinging pastoral letter to his people, rebuking any who had rented rooms for such disreputable purposes." The bishop told them, he said, "no matter how much they need the money, they must share the guilt for the immorality which had developed and could not unload all blame on the Americans."

Both Dr. Yaeger and Dr. Empie stressed the need for the church to give adequate spiritual and moral preparation to youths in uniform. "The problem is one which the military will not solve alone," Dr. Yaeger said. "It has neither the time nor facilities to devote to the moral training of youth in its broader meaning. This, as I view it, is the responsibility of our civilian institutions, especially the church."

Galveston, Tex.—Delegates representing American Lutheran Church brotherhood groups of some 180 parishes in the denomination's Texas District voted here to continue providing scholarships for 60 pre-ministerial students and aiding pre-professional church members in the district.

The Rev. M. W. Bulgerin of Galveston's First Lutheran Church said the Texas District is the only one he knows of in the denomination that provides such scholarships.

Detroit Lakes, Minn.—District Judge R. J. Ruegemer, St. Cloud, ruled that members of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference have no claim on the property of the Mount Calvary Lutheran Church of Ponsford, Minn. He held that the property belongs to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Minneapolis, Minn.—The Augustana Lutheran Church has taken steps to explore unity prospects with three other groups of Lutherans. Members of its ecumenical relations committee are arranging separate sessions with representatives of the three groups in Chicago on March 28. Invited to confer were representatives of the United Lutheran Church in America; The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the joint merger committee of the American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Dr. Oscar A. Benson, Augustana president, said the Chicago conferences will discuss the basis by which altar and pulpit fellowship might be established between his church and the other groups and the relation of such a fellowship to eventual union.

For a time Augustana participated in the merger negotiations of the ALC, ELC, LFC, and UELC. It later withdrew on the grounds that the negotiations were not open to all Lutheran bodies and the agenda of the merger committee did not include ecumenical relations (membership of the proposed merged church in such bodies as the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches).

Some Augustana pastors have been unhappy over the withdrawal from the four-body merger negotiations and have urged that a referendum be conducted among the congregations in their denomination.