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## Theological Observer

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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

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### THE CHURCH IN FORMOSA

Of Christianity on the island of Formosa, Dr. E. G. Homrighausen writes in *Theology Today* (January 1956), in part, as follows: "For nearly a hundred years, two Presbyterian bodies have been at work in Formosa: English Presbyterians in the South (Tainan) and Canadian Presbyterians in the North (Tamsui, Taipei, and other places). Now that the mainland Chinese have come, they have brought their mainland Christian churches with them. Other Christian groups have come now that China is closed to them. Some 500 Roman Catholic missionaries have come with money to build huge institutions, to subsidize students and even provide clothing and food for those who wish to be identified with their church. Sects of various kinds have entered Formosa. So the placid waters of Canadian and English Presbyterianism, which were undisturbed for a century, are being riled. . . . Several things have impressed me about Christianity in Formosa. One is its missionary work among the aboriginal mountain tribes. There are possibly 200 small mountain congregations, all of which were started by natives who were inspired by the Gospel through a remarkable woman named Chi-oang. These congregations bear the marks of suffering and of martyrdom. Then there is missionary work on the Pescadores islands. There are seven congregations now, and the preaching of the Gospel to these 'impossible' people has been accompanied by miracles. Of course, there is educational work, hospital work, evangelistic work—and an amazing work among the lepers. But most inspiring of all is the approved plan of the Presbyterian churches of Formosa to double the number of their churches in ten years. And I am sure they will do it." JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

### THE PROBLEM OF SPIRITUAL HEALING

*Religion in Life* (spring 1956) discusses in four objective articles, contributed by four pastors or theological professors of note, the burning question of faith healing. The last of the contributors, Dr. P. E. Johnson, professor of psychology and religion and of pastoral counseling at the Boston University School of Theology, declares by way of conclusion that the authors do not desire to force conclusions upon anyone, since the skeptical pastor or scientist is entitled to his doubts and there is lack of conclusive evidence and logical coherence in the

face of contradictory evidence. Nevertheless there are cases of faith healing, most of them accomplished by prayer. These cases include not only healings from mental illness such as extreme anxiety, neuroses, schizophrenia, nervous fatigue, and the like, but also cures from physical ailments such as pneumonia, ulcers, yellow jaundice, kidney troubles, and others. Of 123 pastors reporting healings, 46 were Methodist; 19, Episcopalian; 18, Presbyterian; 14, Lutheran; 7, Baptist; 5, Disciples; 3, United Brethren; 2 each, Congregational, Evangelical and Reformed, and Nazarene. Of the healings 80 per cent were declared permanent. Medical diagnosis and treatment were reported in all but nine or ten cases. As the writer says, the miracle of healing is baffling to both science and religion. According to the article, pastoral counseling is the most prevalent form of spiritual healing among Protestant churches today. We bring this report to the attention of our readers since the question of the "interrelation of health with spiritual resources" is being widely discussed today and therefore deserves careful scrutiny on the basis of Scripture also within our communion.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### ON RETURNING TO THE UNITED STATES

In *Theology Today* (April 1956) Professor E. G. Homrighausen of Princeton Theological Seminary publishes his impressions of his country and its church after his return from the Orient, where he spent his Sabbatical year in visiting the Eastern churches. His remarks, especially on American church life, deserve consideration. He writes: "The returning traveler also takes a fresh look at the religious life of America. He has associated with many first-generation Christians who are in the minority. He has visited younger Churches which lack material goods, financial support, trained leaders, efficient organizations, national prestige. Church life in America shares in the abundance and freedom of the land. The American Church is rich in leadership, buildings, budgets, organizations, and national prestige. It is not in a minority position. Indeed, it is popular now to belong to Church. Memberships have increased, voluntary giving is at an all-time high, Church life is successful. Large grants are made to religious causes. The Church enjoys religious liberty. . . . American Christianity seems to have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this. On the other hand, he is a bit cautious about the efficiency and success of American Christianity. Knowing that it is difficult to be a real Christian at any time, he wonders whether this successful Christianity has not been won by too great a compromise with the high demands of discipleship.

'How hardly,' said Jesus, shall 'rich' people get into the Kingdom of God; and yet, how easily have the Church statistics been swelled. Either this is genuine, or it is false! Or, it may be something of both. In any case, it is high time that Christians in America . . . gain a perspective which will be both appreciative and critical."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

*Boston.*—A resolution calling for official recognition of Eastern Orthodoxy as a major faith was adopted here by the House and sent to the Senate. Sponsor of the measure is Rep. Charles W. Patterson (R.—Worcester). It requests that all individuals and media of communications be asked to "include the Eastern Orthodox Church when reference is made to the major faiths."

Similar resolutions are pending in the New York and Rhode Island legislatures. Others have been adopted in recent years by the legislatures of West Virginia, Delaware, Connecticut, Texas, Missouri, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Seven states also have amended their laws to permit Eastern Orthodox churches to incorporate legally within their boundaries. They are New York, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois.

*Minneapolis, Minn.*—Adlai Stevenson, Democratic presidential hopeful, received Holy Communion at a Lutheran church here while the minister in a nearby Unitarian church preached a sermon on "Is Stevenson Still a Unitarian?" Mr. Stevenson received Communion at Ebenezer (Augustana) Lutheran Church in a party that included Gov. Orville Freeman, a deacon at the church. The Rev. Charles E. Johnson, Ebenezer pastor, said the only criterion for participation was belief that "Christ died for you."

In his sermon at First Unitarian Church the Rev. Carl Storm said there is nothing unusual about Mr. Stevenson being a member of both the Presbyterian and Unitarian Churches. He said it is common for Unitarians to hold dual memberships and that some are members of three or more church bodies.

Noting that Mr. Stevenson has been criticized for joining the Lake Forest, Ill., Presbyterian church while at the same time retaining his old membership in the Bloomington, Ill., Unitarian church, Mr. Storm said he was certain Mr. Stevenson acted without political motive.

He pointed out that Mr. Stevenson's father had been an active Presbyterian and his mother a Unitarian and that he grew up under the influence of both churches. Since membership in a Unitarian fel-

lowship requires no credal belief, there is no theological bar to dual memberships, Mr. Storm said. A Unitarian, he explained, "is perfectly free to join any non-Unitarian church he pleases if he can do so in accordance with his own conscience."

*Chicago.*— College fraternity rituals were criticized as "pagan" and "deistic" by Dr. Reuben W. Hahn of Chicago, Executive Secretary of the Student Service Commission, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, at its biennial meeting here. The commission comprises clergymen, student pastors, and counselors who serve some 25,000 Lutheran students on the nation's campuses.

"Deistic rituals might recognize the existence of God but not necessarily the Triune God," he said, adding that they frequently omit reference to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Dr. Hahn urged the counselors not to shirk their responsibility in advising students regarding what he called the core problem of fraternity affiliation—its religious features.

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NEWS BUREAU OF THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

*New York.*— The All Lutheran Food Appeal, co-operative effort of the National Lutheran Council and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to raise farm commodities for overseas relief purposes, was suspended by a vote of the Board of Directors of Lutheran World Relief here. Over the past three years farmers donated products valued at a total of over \$1,551,000 in what was described as "an outpouring of Christian generosity."

The immediate suspension of the ALFA program was motivated by a recent U. S. Government decision to add wheat, corn, rice, and beans to the list of surplus commodities donated to voluntary agencies for overseas distribution among the needy. In order to "embrace to the full the opportunity to provide more food for more needy people by drawing upon these vast [Government surplus] agricultural resources," the LWR directors decided to concentrate on the distribution of Government-donated foods rather than on the gathering of such donations from farmers.

Some 8,000 clergymen and laymen of the church bodies participating in the National Lutheran Council and of the Missouri Synod co-operated in the All Lutheran Food Appeal. This co-operation resulted in donations valued at \$259,947 in 1953; \$657,727 in 1954; and \$633,826 in 1955.

*New York.*—Relief needs and operations will be studied on an around-the-world tour by Bernard A. Confer, executive secretary of Lutheran World Relief, and the Rev. Werner Kuntz, director of the Board of World Relief, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The two Lutheran relief executives departed by air March 5 for Japan, Korea, Formosa, and Hong Kong on the first leg of the two-month tour. They will continue to India, where they will visit relief organizations in various cities; then they will proceed to Pakistan and the Middle East.

Their studies of the relief situation in the Middle East will include visits to the Lutheran World Federation's Near East Branch in the Holy Land as well as a trip to Egypt. In Europe Mr. Confer and Mr. Kuntz will visit headquarters of both the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland, before returning here on May 5.

*Berlin, Germany.*—The Communist rulers of Magdeburg in East Germany plan to raze the famed Church of St. Ulrich in spite of protests from the Evangelical Church of Saxony, it was learned here.

The Evangelical Church in Germany had recently designated Magdeburg as the 1956 "City of Church Reconstruction," and fund-raising drives were conducted throughout East and West Germany, chiefly for the reconstruction of the St. Ulrich Church, newspapers here reported.

The Communist city council's decision to raze the church was condemned in a statement by church authorities stating that "neither city planning nor traffic conditions can be legitimately invoked to justify this measure." The statement, which was read in all Protestant churches of Magdeburg, warned the city council it "must assume before history the full responsibility for removing one of the oldest architectural monuments of our city as well as for seriously endangering future pastoral care of the rapidly growing population."

The newspapers reporting on these events in Magdeburg also carried an announcement by authorities of the Evangelical Church in Germany that 34 Evangelical pastors and church workers were still held by Communist authorities in East Germany. While some of the arrests date back to 1947, the majority of those detained were imprisoned during the 1953 antichurch campaign in East Germany. Among those still in prison were the seven officials of the Evangelical Railway Mission arrested earlier this year on charges of espionage, the announcement explained. It added that by now 91 out of 97 main posts of the Evangelical Railway Mission in East Germany have been closed.

*Arnoldsheim, Germany.*—Groundwork for a formal theological discussion between Lutheran and Reformed theologians on an international scale was laid at a two-day informal meeting at the Evangelical Academy between ten Lutheran and ten Reformed theologians from Germany, Sweden, Holland, Switzerland, and France. The desirability of a formal theological discussion between the representatives of the two churches was suggested last summer at the meeting of the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order.

Among the Lutheran participants in this preliminary conference were Bishop Anders Nygren of Lund, Sweden, past president of the Lutheran World Federation; Prof. Peter Brunner of Heidelberg, Germany; and Dr. George Hoffmann, rector of the German Evangelical Academy of Loccum. While none of the participants in the preliminary meeting spoke for their churches, they had all been chosen by their churches and had the approval to support plans for a future formal conference.

Also present at the informal meeting were observers from the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches.

*New York.*—A Lutheran will be among the ten American Protestant clergymen who will preach in Great Britain next summer under a preachers' interchange program sponsored by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. and the British Council of Churches.

The Rev. Dana H. Johnson, pastor of Fourth Lutheran Church of Springfield, Ohio, has been named as one of the American clergymen who will cross the Atlantic to preach in various British pulpits and attend denominational and interdenominational conferences in Great Britain. He is a pastor of the United Lutheran Church in America.

Other members of the group selected for this interchange program to represent American churches include Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Evangelical and Reformed clergymen, the National Council of Churches announced here.

The British group of ten clergymen, including the canon of Westminster (Church of England), as well as representatives of the Church of Scotland and Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, and Baptist clergymen, will visit 21 states to preach and to speak to local church councils, the NCC announcement said.

The 1956 interchange of American and British preachers will mark the thirtieth year of the program, the NCC added.