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## Theological Observer

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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

### A STRATEGY FOR THE CHRISTIAN MISSION

Antei Hiyane, professor of comparative religions at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, in *Religion in Life* (Autumn 1956), suggests a new "strategy for the Christian mission." In his opinion Japan presents *the world's religions in miniature* (italics original). "Its religious soil is so fertile that religions are gathered here as they were in Athens when the apostle Paul preached there." The first Protestant missionaries reached Japan in 1859. Yet today the number of Christians is only about 200,000, most of them among the intelligentsia. One reason for this small number is, as he believes, the missionaries' "indifferent attitude to the native conditions of the non-Christian soil." He recommends, therefore, that a study of the non-Christian religions of Japan should be more earnestly made so that the Christian ministry may more effectively speak to them. Speaking of Christianity, he writes: "Christianity is neither one among the religions nor the highest stage of religious development. It is the absolute religion, the one and absolute revelation from God, as Peter said: 'In none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men wherein we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). The urgent problem in Christianity is not to find the common element with other religions by generalization, but to demonstrate its uniqueness against other religions. Japan is not only a miniature of the world religions, but also an Armageddon where Christianity shall win the last victory over all religions. Christian theology must demonstrate the absolute nature of Christianity."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

### A CONSENSUS OF RESIGNATION

It is by this name that Johannes Meister in *Die Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung* (August 1, 1956) designates an agreement between the Reformed and the Lutheran churches in The Netherlands, which is to serve as the basis of pulpit and altar fellowship between the two groups. The ten paragraphs of the consensus set forth frankly their points both of agreement and difference on the Lord's Supper, though it does not disavow the antithesis as unscriptural. In his opinion it is a consensus of two parties who agree on the relativity of knowing the truth (*die Relativität der Wahrheitserkenntnis*), and so a consensus of resignation, i. e., an agreement of unresisting acquiescence. The seventh paragraph may best illustrate what the author means, for there we read: "Both churches confess that Christ in and by the Sacrament is truly

present. The Lutherans ask the Calvinists whether and in what measure they can vindicate . . . Answer 47 of the Heidelberg Catechism ('Christ is true Man and true God; according to His human nature, He is now not on earth; but according to His Godhead, majesty, grace, and Spirit, He is at no time absent from us'). The Calvinists ask the Lutherans whether an omnipresence of the human nature of Christ does not actually mean the annulment of the incarnation. Both churches, therefore, believe that the doctrine of the Lord's Supper must once more be thought through theologically." The writer remarks that the two denominations have not answered the question why, with a commonly recognized basis for altar and pulpit fellowship, they did not decide upon complete church union. To this he adds that the consensus deserves the interest of the Germans, since it might mean a welcome solution of their own situation, if indeed it is capable of doing what in the opinion of the churches in The Netherlands it should accomplish. This, however, he denies, for such a consensus questions both the perspicuity and simplicity of the Word of God.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

*Bangalore, South India.*—Representatives of the Church of South India and the Lutheran Churches of this country have suspended their joint theological talks following inability to reach agreement here on "the nature of the Church's unity and continuity." The failure was the first in the six-year history of the two groups' joint theological commission. At previous meetings "agreed statements" were adopted on the Law and the Gospel, the doctrine of election, the relation of creedal and confessional statements to the being of the church, and the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

At last year's meeting, the commission recommended that the CSI and the Lutheran Churches enter into pulpit and altar fellowship. This year's obstacle to further agreement was the question of the Historic Episcopate, which the CSI claims to have inherited from the Anglicans and which the Lutherans do not regard as essential to the true nature of the church.

The Lutherans, who directly represent the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India rather than its member bodies, came with Federation instructions to propose continuance of the discussions. However, the CSI representatives expressed unwillingness to continue until earlier recommendations were implemented. As a result, the commission voted to inform the represented churches that it had

"completed the work it had been asked to do," and not to meet again next year. However, it asked for the holding of four regional theological conferences in 1957 between the two groups.

In the discussion on the nature of the church, the Lutherans asked whether the CSI would be willing to enter negotiations for union "with an open mind," without demanding the acceptance of the Historic Episcopate as a precondition of negotiations. In reply, the CSI representatives introduced a statement in which they listed "the reasons which make it seem to us most unlikely that we shall be led to abandon the Historic Episcopate." They said it was retained by their church "because it has proved itself to be of great value for the enrichment of life of the Church."

"In any wider union," they stressed, "the CSI would wish that it, no less than the other uniting Churches, should be able to bring into the life of the united Church all the riches of its own life and inheritance. This would include its ministry through which it finds itself linked with the Churches of the past centuries to which it is historically joined in a rich continuity."

The CSI representatives added, however, that "neither (the Historic Episcopate's) original acceptance nor its retention depends upon the acceptance of any doctrine of apostolic succession, in the sense that one particular form of the ministry is the sole and essential channel for the transmission of the grace needed for the exercise of the ministry in the Church of God." They pointed out also that "though pressed by the Anglican Churches to reconsider its relation to nonepiscopal parent Churches, (the CSI has) firmly refused to do so."

The CSI delegation summed up their position in these words: "Certainly in entering into negotiations for wider union the CSI would not refuse to discuss with the utmost frankness and to listen to all that the other Churches might desire to say about the theology of the ministry as well as about its practical organization; and this would obviously include the fullest discussion of episcopacy. We dare not lay down beforehand where the Holy Spirit will guide us to go, and we must be ready and willing to follow where He leads. But in the light of our experience, we earnestly commend to our Lutheran brethren the gift which we have received and which we have come increasingly to value."

*Trenton, N. J.*—Some 600 psychiatrists from 13 states heard a warning here from a Roman Catholic educator that they will get cooperation from the church only if they do not attack the concept of God and doctrines of faith.

The Rev. Thomas Verner Moore, for many years on the faculty of Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C., and a pioneer in the development of child-guidance centers, issued the warning in a paper on "The Era of Religion and Psychiatry" at the fourth annual Psychiatric Institute. He said a psychiatrist "will be seriously handicapped" if he "does not recognize a Supreme Being and does not seek the aid of Infinite Goodness in making himself what he ought to be and also in curing his patients."

*Washington, D. C.*—A new fortnightly undenominational evangelical Protestant magazine, *Christianity Today*, was launched here with a press run of 285,000 copies. A free sample copy was sent to nearly every Protestant clergyman in the country. Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, editor, distributed copies of the first issue at a news conference here. He announced that the magazine had 25,000 paid subscriptions before the first issue was off the press.

Dr. Henry said *Christianity Today* will "present, in a positive and constructive way, the basic truths of the Christian faith as taught in the Scriptures." He said the magazine will be "neither reactionary nor static." It will seek to present "the content of the Christian faith on a high ethical plane, undergirded by Christian love and empowered by the Holy Spirit," he added.

In a lead editorial entitled "Why *Christianity Today*?" the editors declared:

"Neglected, slighted, misrepresented — evangelical Christianity needs a clear voice to speak with conviction and love, and to state its true position and its relevance to the world crisis. Theological Liberalism has failed to meet the moral and spiritual needs of the people. Neither the man on the street nor the intellectual is today much attracted by its preaching and theology." The editorial urged a "return to truly Biblical preaching" and said the editors were confident "the answer to theological confusion existing in the world can be found in the Scriptures."

Declaring that the magazine will be ecumenical in spirit in keeping with "the New Testament teaching of unity of believers in Jesus Christ," the editorial said: "*Christianity Today* will apply the Biblical revelations to the contemporary social crisis, by presenting the implications of the total Gospel message for every area of life."

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM NLC NEWS SERVICE

*Harrisburg, Pa.*—The United Lutheran Church in America has placed itself on record officially as being ready to merge with "all or any" of the Lutheran bodies in this country. In action taken at its 20th

biennial convention here, the ULCA declared to the 15 other Lutheran groups "its desire to merge with all or any of them in organic union."

In so doing, delegates affirmed and then broadened a resolution which the church adopted in 1948 and which limited its offer of merger to the seven other bodies associated with it in the National Lutheran Council. In declaring the motion adopted, Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, president of the ULCA, observed that "this recommendation is now the will and prayer of the ULCA."

At the same time the convention of the 2,270,000-member ULCA endorsed the steps toward all-inclusive merger which have already been taken by its Special Commission on Relations to American Lutheran Church Bodies.

Last December the ULCA commission joined with a similar commission of the half-million-member Augustana Lutheran Church in issuing a joint invitation to all the Lutheran bodies in America to meet and "consider such organic union as will give real evidence of our unity in the faith."

The interested bodies, the invitation added, would be asked "to proceed to draft a constitution and devise organizational procedures to effect union." Involved in the invitation are 16 Lutheran groups which represent about 7,250,000 baptized members in the United States. However, it was reported to the convention that only four of these bodies, including the ULCA and Augustana, have thus far "expressed willingness to negotiate toward organic union." The others who have accepted the invitation are the 35,000-member Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Suomi Synod) and the 20,000-member American Evangelical Lutheran Church.

It is also expected that three other bodies now engaged in negotiations toward a separate merger will be represented at the deliberations by a joint committee. These are the million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church, the 900,000-member American Lutheran Church, and the 60,000-member United Evangelical Lutheran Church. Among the bodies absent from the deliberation will be the 2,000,000-member Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which declined the invitation on the grounds that it could not discuss organic union before doctrinal agreement has been reached.

Adopting the merger resolutions "in the conviction that this is God's day for Lutheran union in America," the convention gave its approval in a unanimous rising vote amid a round of vigorous applause.

*Harrisburg, Pa.*—Endorsement of planned parenthood was contained in a series of statements on marriage and family life adopted

by the United Lutheran Church in America at its 20th biennial convention here. Expressing its views on this issue, the ULCA called upon husband and wife to "exercise the power of procreation responsibly before God."

"This implies," it said, "planning their parenthood in accordance with their ability to provide for their children and carefully nurture them in fullness of Christian faith and life." In such decisions, it added, "the health and welfare of the mother-wife should be a major concern."

"Irresponsible conception of children up to the limit of biological capacity and selfish limitation of the number of children are equally detrimental," the ULCA's statement warned. It suggested that the choice of conception control should be made upon professional medical advice.

The recommendations adopted by the delegates were based on a five-year study of Christian teachings concerning love, sex, marriage, divorce, and family life prepared by a Special Commission on Marriage and Divorce under the direction of the ULCA's Board of Social Missions.

On responsible parenthood, the board declared that "in thankfulness to God a couple may so plan their sexual relations that any child born to them will be wanted for itself and will not be the cause of unwise strain upon the mother's emotional and physical well-being." The study condemned the misuse of birth control methods but said that "the possibilities of misuse do not necessarily imply that conception control is in itself improper."

By freeing the wife and mother from the fear of too-frequent pregnancy and by limiting the number of children in accordance with the ability of the family to rear and nurture their children properly," it added, "conception control may contribute positively to the well-being of the family."

Efforts of medical science to overcome infertility were commended in the study as an aid to carrying out "God's command to be fruitful and multiply." In this connection, the study said that artificial insemination represented one method of achieving conception. "When the semen has come from the husband of the woman impregnated, we find no valid objection to be raised," the board said. "When, however, the semen is from a donor not the husband, then the case is different." Spread of such a practice, it warned, would raise many legal questions and would have a serious effect on husband, wife, and child.