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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM

THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

Antsirabe, Madagascar. — Tanganyika's seven Lutheran church bodies, with a combined baptized membership of some 329,000, have taken a first step toward comprehensive merger, the second all-Africa Lutheran conference heard here.

The Rev. Ruben Pedersen of Singida, chairman of the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Tanganyika, said the organization at its most recent meeting unanimously voted to set up a committee "to lay initial plans for the establishment of one Lutheran Church in Tanganyika."

Mr. Pedersen, who is also president of one of the seven bodies, the Lutheran Church of Central Tanganyika, pointed out that "this will involve a number of important changes in present mission board-indigenous church relationships, and requires diligent and consecrated study."

He called attention to the fact that "numerically the Lutherans are the largest Protestant group in Tanganyika." Among the country's 9 million inhabitants, about one in every 27 is a Lutheran.

He reported also that, effective next March, the number of Tanganyika church bodies which are members of the Lutheran World Federation will rise to three, and the FLCT will become the National Committee of the LWF in that East African territory which on Sept. 1 assumed "responsible government."

The FLCT was officially constituted in 1959. At the time, the former Lutheran Missions Council of that country disbanded, turning its responsibilities over to the churches' new common agency.

These responsibilities include the conduct of three joint Lutheran institutions—a secondary school, a theological college, and a

medical assistants' training center—as well as a united Christian literature printing and distribution program.

Mr. Pedersen, a missionary of the Augustana Lutheran Church, told also of the initiation last year of religious work among Asians in Dar es Salaam and other Tanganyika communities by a Lutheran pastor from India, the Rev. Victor Gunny.

The Asian missionary's work is supported jointly by the FLCT, the Lutheran World Federation Department of World Mission, and the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India.

Lutherans in the Union of South Africa, mainly in Natal, likewise have started evangelistic work among Indian residents, according to another report presented here.

Antsirabe, Madagascar. — (LWF) — Lutheranism in Nigeria has doubled in strength in the past five years, the second all-Africa Lutheran conference learned here.

"In 1955 (the year of the first all-Africa Lutheran conference at Marangu, Tanganyika) we had a communicant membership of 4,082," reported President Akila Todi of the Lutheran Church of Christ in the Sudan. "Today we have 8,180."

He went on: "In 1955 we reported that an average of 875 adults and infants were baptized a year. In 1959 the number was 1,976. . . . In 1955 the church had 9 Nigerian pastors, today 20.

"We had only one Bible school in 1955, now we have 3. We have now 36 primary schools, against 18 in 1955. In our Teacher Training Center we have 71 students today, against 27 in 1955."

President Todi reported also that in the past five years the church has added 69 villages to the list of 300 it had members in at the time of the Marangu conference. The

church, which developed from the work of the Danish branch of the Sudan United Mission, now has 10,400 baptized members. It became autonomous in 1954.

Noting that "before we return to Nigeria from this conference, our country (will have) become fully independent," the church president said, "We are grateful to God for this national achievement, but we realize that it places new responsibilities on the Christian church in Nigeria."

Highlights of reports on Lutheranism in other countries heard by delegates here included the following:

Madagascar.—Lutheranism came to this island when Norwegian missionaries began work 94 years ago. American Lutherans of Norwegian background established a field in Madagascar more than 70 years ago, and French Lutherans have been helping support the mission work for about 60 years.

All the churches resulting from these mission endeavors are now united in one general body, the Malagasy Lutheran Church, organized 10 years ago. This body is now assuming a major responsibility for the Lutheran secondary schools of Madagascar, whose total enrollment surpasses 1,000.

Ethiopia.—Here, too, the fruits of mission work by Lutherans of various nationalities are brought together in a single national church: the Ethiopian Evangelical Church—Mekane Yesus, which last January held its second general assembly and ratified its new constitution.

Behind the autonomous church, with its 32,500 members in four synods, lie Norwegian, Swedish, German, and American missions. Currently efforts are being made to launch joint programs in theological education and Christian literature.

Liberia.—Although the Liberia mission of the United Lutheran Church in America this year marked its centenary, the Lutheran Church in Liberia was established only 13 years ago.

A joint committee is now working the terms of church mission relations so as to integrate the two bodies. The church has over 5,000 baptized members in 108 towns and villages extending 200 miles inland from Monrovia on the coast.

Vice-President Rakoto Andrianarijoana presented the report of the Malagasy Church, President Emmanuel Gebre Sillassie that of the Ethiopian Church, and President Ezra Keller the report of the Liberian Church.

Antsirabe, Madagascar.—Lutherans must be "the most ecumenically minded denomination of all," Bishop Heinrich Meyer of Lübeck, Germany, told the second all-Africa Lutheran conference here.

"As members of the one universal church, we can never cease to stretch out our hands and thoughts in search of those who in other denominations believe in Jesus Christ," said Dr. Meyer, who is chairman of the Lutheran World Federation Commission on World Mission.

"We must never become weary of talking with them about Jesus and His grace until we have altar and pulpit fellowship with them because we have become one with them in truth. This, however, is not an easy way.

"We certainly must not forget the love of Jesus Christ for truth's sake, but we cannot give up the truth for love's sake either, for Jesus is both: the love and the truth."

Saint Louis, Mo.—America's Lutheran Church bodies were called upon here to acknowledge the unity that already exists between them as followers of Christ. Public acknowledgement of existing unity was stressed by Dr. Philip A. Johnson, public relations director of the National Lutheran Council, as a "next step" in closing the ranks of a divided Lutheranism.

"For Lutheran Christians who accept the Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, and the Lutheran Confessions, to withhold acknowledgement of unity," he said, "is a

compromise of Christian witness far more serious than that of standing together—to pray and to preach—while we disagree on certain matters of practice.”

Speaking at the 47th annual meeting of the National Lutheran Editors' and Managers' Association, Dr. Johnson asserted that “we don't manufacture unity, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit.”

“Our role,” he told the church editors and publishers, “is to discover, acknowledge and express His gift of unity.”

Dr. Johnson noted that in the near future most of the Lutherans in America will hold membership in three church bodies — The American Lutheran Church of 2,250,000 members, formed by a merger of the Evangelical, American, and United Evangelical Lutheran Churches; the Lutheran Church in America of 3,300,000 members, expected to be organized in 1962 by merger of the United, Augustana, Finnish Evangelical (Suomi Synod), and American Evangelical Lutheran Churches; and The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod of 2,400,000 members.

Pointing out that these groups have co-operated on the national level in many areas of activity, the speaker charged that “we have been practicing a unionism of the elite, but the man in the pew and the pastor in the pulpit don't realize it.”

“If it's not wrong for leaders to meet, pray, and work together, then it's not wrong for followers, and it's not wrong for editors to recognize the fact,” he said. He suggested further that it was “time for forms and structures to catch up with our practice.”

Dr. Johnson urged that members of congregations of the several bodies “ought to step across the street” and get acquainted with each other. “If we can't break the bread of the Sacrament together, we could and should break the bread of Christian friendship,” he said. “If we can't yet preach freely

in one another's pulpits, we can exchange views in one another's living rooms.”

The editors and publishers also heard a seminary president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod deplore the divided state of American Lutheranism as “the greatest scandal in organized Christianity.”

“It is high tragedy that we cannot walk the same pathway,” declared Dr. George J. Beto, head of Concordia Seminary at Springfield, Ill., who said that “if I were a church editor I would dedicate myself to the task of eliminating this scandal.”

He also called for greater loyalty to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions as a means to achieve the goal of ultimate Lutheran unity. The removal of obstacles to a united church was cited by Dr. Beto as one of five campaigns he would “carry on simultaneously” as a church editor.

Another, he said, would be a campaign for “better communication of the Gospel” because “too many sermons are not lay related” and “theological jargon is as unintelligible to the average layman as medical terminology is to the non-physician.”

Also advocated by Dr. Beto were campaigns by church editors against ritualism, and the danger of making Lutheranism a middle-class social organization rather than a religious fellowship.

Church unity was also the subject of a brief address by Dr. John W. Behnken of St. Louis, President of the Missouri Synod, who asserted that “we in America, and particularly you editors, face the obligation to stress again and again that the Lutheran Church stands for sound doctrine.”

“If only we Lutherans could agree on matters of doctrine, how far we could go!” he exclaimed.

Discussing differences which have threatened to disrupt the Lutheran Synodical Conference, of which the Missouri Synod is the largest member, Dr. Behnken said there is “wonderful agreement” in the conference on

"solid matters of doctrine," but that its members were divided on the fellowship issue.

"We are agreed on the principles of fellowship, but we disagree on their application," he said. He reported that the question will be discussed at a special meeting of the conference to be held after next Easter.

The dispute within the conference centers in charges by the Wisconsin Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church that the Missouri Synod is guilty of "unscriptural" practice in praying and working with other Lutherans with whom it does not have doctrinal agreement.

Dr. Behnken expressed cautious optimism over the conversations inaugurated between the National Lutheran Council and the Missouri Synod to discuss the theology of inter-Lutheran co-operation, indicating that he felt the talks were a step in the right direction. The first meeting was held in Chicago last July, and the second will take place in St. Louis on Nov. 18 and 19.

Washington, D. C. — Lutheran Service Centers throughout the world were used by 159,095 servicemen during the first half of 1960, it was announced here. According to the Lutheran Service Commission, which issued an accumulated activities report for the first six months, military personnel were served at 34 facilities which the commission supports.

Four service centers are currently in operation overseas. They are Kaiserslautern, Germany; Tachikawa, Japan; Olongapo, Philippine Islands; and Okinawa. In addition the LSC staffs a center on Fenwick Pier in Hong Kong. Statistics for these five locations showed that over 55,000 men visited these centers while overseas.

The report showed that 243 service people had joined the Lutheran Church through the commission's program. The administrators pointed out that many more had undoubtedly been brought within the range of the local parish ministry but are unrecorded

by the commission. In support of this they noted that over 4,300 persons had been referred to local churches.

Although not a primary function of the centers, welfare cases totaled 293. These included referring servicemen and their dependents to proper welfare agencies, aiding men and women of the armed forces when in need, and finding housing for families of service personnel.

A joint agency of the National Lutheran Council and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the LSC provides centers in communities near military bases to provide a Christian atmosphere in which service people may relax while away from their regular military duties.

Antsirabe, Madagascar. — Lutherans on American and Norwegian mission fields will establish this year a single Lutheran Church in the Cameroun, according to a report presented at the second All-Africa Lutheran conference here.

The report, which was prepared by F. Martin Braaten of Ngaoundere, American missionary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, said workers of the two fields have just completed a constitution "with a view of forming a self-governing church recognized by the Cameroun government."

"This constitution will be put into effect this year to coincide with the year of the Cameroun Republic's independence," he said. Formerly a United Nations trust territory under French protection, Cameroun became free on Jan. 1, 1960.

The second mission field involved is that of the Norwegian Missionary Society. A Lutheran Brethren Mission from the United States also functions in that country.

Mr. Braaten, treasurer and education director of the ELC mission, said "a number of discussions have been held with a view to the eventual union of the Lutheran churches of the Cameroun, but . . . the Lu-

theran Brethren Mission is opposed, at least for the present, to any union."

Meanwhile, he reported, the other two missions have been collaborating in medical work at Ngaoundere, and in the past two years they have opened a joint normal school and a joint theological seminary.

Here are summaries from other reports presented here:

Southern Rhodesia. — The Church of Sweden mission in that country was started in 1903 by missionaries from the church's field in South Africa, which had been opened 25 years earlier. After a precarious beginning because of missionaries' ill health and premature death, the work became well established, and there is now an indigenous African Lutheran Church with about 13,000 members. Sunday school enrollments total 11,800, and 4,000 catechumens receive instruction for church membership each year.

South Africa. — The oldest Lutheran church in the country was built in 1792 at Cape Town. There are now numerous German, Scandinavian, and American missions working in different areas, and the country's total population of Lutherans of all races exceeds 400,000. Constitutional work in recent years toward a united Lutheran Church bore first fruits in July, when the first of several proposed regional bodies was formed in the Zulu-Xhosa-Swazi region.

South-West Africa. — The country has two church bodies with about 100,000 members each: the Lutheran Church in Southwest Africa, growing out of the work of the German Rhenish Mission, and the Lutheran Ovambokavango Church, resulting from Finnish missionary activity. The former was reorganized on an indigenous basis in 1957, while the latter adopted a constitution defining its autonomy in 1956, with new regulations two years later. The Ovambokavango Church intends eventually to have a bishop.

Antsirabe, Madagascar. — The second all-Africa Lutheran conference recommended here a study of "questions that confront the church today to which the standard doctrinal writings of Lutheranism — written in the 16th century — cannot give complete answers."

It proposed that Lutherans of Madagascar and of each nation or region of Africa set up two committees to examine such questions "in the light of the Word of God" and to report their findings to the third All-Africa Lutheran conference, to be held in 1965.

One committee would deal with liturgy, including hymns and music, while the other would study "the relation of church and state with specific attention to local conditions, Baptism, the Holy Spirit, intercommunion, the historic episcopate."

At the same time the conference asked the Lutheran World Federation Commission on Theology to co-operate with the African committee that would be studying the second set of topics. Purpose of the studies, the conference said, would be to "give guidance for ecumenical discussions."

"Since the Lutheran churches of Africa will be faced with the task of participation in negotiations for wider church union," the conference "drew the attention of the regional study committees to the necessity of studying and formulating what the Lutheran churches deem to be an essential doctrinal basis for church union."

At the same time it expressed the opinion "that Lutheran unity in a nation or region (should) be endeavored before effective participation in ecumenical negotiation regarding faith and order."

Winnipeg. — Representatives of Canadian Lutheranism, meeting here for two days of doctrinal discussion, unanimously adopted a seven-point statement of agreement on "The Gospel We Preach."

Present at the conference were 28 representatives from 12 Canadian districts or synods of seven parent bodies in the United States.

After hearing three papers on the subject, "The Gospel We Preach: Its Content; Its Purpose; Its Results; Its Relevancy; and Its Source," the group discussed in detail a one-page summary of seven brief paragraphs. As finally approved, the statement said:

1. The Gospel is the good news of God's promises and their fulfillment in Christ, who by His perfect obedience, suffering, death, and resurrection, has redeemed man from the fall and its consequences.

2. The Gospel is the central message of God's unchangeable Word, through which God offers, conveys, and affirms the forgiveness of sins, thus imparting life and salvation to those who believe it.

3. The Gospel is the true, divine, saving means of grace. It gives to the sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, their saving power. It creates faith to accept what it offers.

4. The Gospel is God's unconditionally free offer of salvation to all men; its rejection seals man's condemnation.

5. The Gospel is the means whereby God gives, together with faith in Christ as Saviour, the desire and the ability to do His will by giving us both victory through Christ in the struggle with our sinful nature and grace to grow in the virtues which characterize the new life in Christ.

6. The preaching of the Gospel is the proclamation of the Christ of the Scriptures; God Incarnate, who died for our trespasses, rose for our justification, and lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit; who together with the Father sends the Holy Spirit; He is the head of the church, which is His body, and He will return to judge the living and the dead.

7. The Lord, who builds His church through the preaching of the Gospel, has expressly commanded that they who believe in the Gospel must bear witness to it: "Go

into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." Mark 16:15.

Presenting papers on the discussion topic were Prof. T. P. Solem of Luther Seminary, Saskatoon, representing the Evangelical, American and United Evangelical Lutheran churches, now merged in The American Lutheran Church; Prof. Harold Floreen, also of Luther Seminary, Saskatoon, representing the United and Augustana Lutheran churches; and the Rev. George Rode of Edmonton, on behalf of the Lutheran Church—Canada, comprising four Districts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Following adoption of the statement, Dr. Karl Holfeld of Regina, president-elect of the Canada District of The ALC, said this was the first time to his knowledge that representatives of all Lutheran Churches in Canada had reached "such hearty agreement on such basic material."

The Rev. William E. Riekert (ALC) of Regina said, "For me this has been a most thrilling experience, for with this adoption we are one in the Gospel we preach. May we soon be one for the better proclamation of this Gospel."

Dr. Albert Schwermann of Edmonton, principal of Concordia College and president of the Lutheran Church—Canada, said he was "highly elated over this meeting." He felt the meeting "got into the minds of the men," and he was struck, he said, by the evident desire to be guided by the Scriptures.

The Rev. Axel Husted-Christensen of Winnipeg, representing the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, asked the question, "If according to Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, it is enough to agree regarding the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, is there anything further that separates us?"

On a motion by Dr. Otto A. Olson, Jr., of Saskatoon, president of the Canada Conference of the Augustana Lutheran Church,

the group voted to present the seven-point statement to the churches for their approval.

Should all approve it, it was suggested by the Rev. Norman Berner of Kitchener, Ontario, assistant to the president of the ULCA's Canada Synod, then they should declare pulpit and altar fellowship in effect. However, the Rev. L. W. Koehler of Winnipeg, president of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan District of the Missouri Synod, pointed to the need for agreement on other points, as "practice must be consistent with doctrine." As two examples, he mentioned the issues of lodge membership and co-operation with denominations with whom doctrinal agreement has not been established. Warning against the danger of encouraging a false optimism, he stressed that there are still many areas in which agreement has to be demonstrated.

The meeting here, Sept. 6—7, for doctrinal talks was arranged in place of the unity discussions which the Canadian groups had held annually for five years up to 1959. They were temporarily suspended last year pending completion of merger negotiations among several parent bodies in the United States.

Allentown, Pa.—Dr. Erling N. Jensen, 52, of Ames, Iowa, a lay leader of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, has been named president of Muhlenberg College here. He will assume the post next Feb. 1.

Dr. Jensen is chairman of the physics department at Iowa State University and senior physicist at the Institute for Atomic Research, conducted at Ames by the Atomic Energy Commission. His time is about equally di-

vided between the university and the institute.

Dr. Jensen was unanimously elected as Muhlenberg's seventh president by the college board of trustees on Sept. 8, prior to the opening of the school's 113th academic year. It has more than 1,000 undergraduates.

Prior to joining the Iowa State faculty in 1943, Dr. Jensen was a high school principal in Iowa and later professor of science at Grand View. He holds degrees from Drake (B.A.), Columbia (M.A.) and Iowa State (Ph.D.). He is the author or co-author of more than 20 research articles in the field of nuclear physics, published in *Physical Review* or *Review of Scientific Instruments*. He is also senior author of a manual used in elementary physics at Iowa State.

Minneapolis.—Formation of 163 conferences in the 19 districts of the newly established The American Lutheran Church began early in September.

The 19 territorial districts of the new church in the United States and Canada were organized at meetings held from May to July. The various conferences within the districts will be formed from September through December. Each conference will be headed by a chairman and a secretary.

Major consideration will be given by the conference meetings to ways of raising the new church's first annual budget of \$18,102,254, which includes \$2 million being sought in a special "Year of Jubilee" appeal to provide extra funds for missions, education, and welfare activities.