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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE MODERN CHRIST

The *Church Quarterly Review*, London (April—June 1961), discusses the Christ of modern liberal Protestantism, and in the article we find the following penetrating analysis: "In a world that was gradually growing better and better by its own momentum what room was left for salvation, redemption, atonement, judgment? . . . Here we have the clue to the reduced or humanitarian Christology characteristic of nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism. . . . The motive of liberal Protestantism that we have suggested was not of course made explicit. The line taken was something like this. Liberal Protestants asked themselves what was the relation between the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of St. Paul, of St. John, and of Catholic piety. Their answer was roughly this that the life of Jesus of Nazareth provided the basis for an ethical humanitarianism which became a mystery religion in contact with Oriental-Greek cults, with this important difference that for Christianity immortality was morally conditioned to an extent not found elsewhere. Liberal Protestantism did its best to get back to the Jesus of history, whose features were to be found in the Synoptic Gospels. The Christ of St. Paul and of the Fourth Gospel was not regarded as historic. Ostensibly this was because the Christology of St. Paul and of the Fourth Gospel, which emphasized the divinity of Christ, did not agree with that of the Synoptists; but we suggest that the real reason was that it did not conform to the philosophical presuppositions with which liberal Protestantism approached the Christological problem. Such a suggestion is not easy to justify directly, but here is what looks like a confirmation of it. Even in the Synoptists liberal Protestantism found a good deal that was not consistent with their

reduced Christology. Instead of attributing this difficulty to the arbitrary mold into which they were trying to fit the Synoptic data, they attributed it to the intrusion of Paulinism into the Synoptic tradition."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER FAITHS

The Modern Churchman (January 1961), under this heading, directs attention to the challenge of ethnic religions which Christianity faces today. More is being published on these awakening and aggressive religions in the Western world than ever before. The following are a few striking paragraphs.

"Even more significant is the revival and reformation of non-Christian religions. It is debatable how far this is a religious revival and how much of it is one aspect of nationalism; probably the two are inextricably mingled. But this only shows how much religion imbues cultures. In Turkey, scene of the greatest attacks on Islamic authority, recent years have seen a revival of Muslim practices: the call to prayer restored to Arabic after a short period in Turkish; the pilgrimage to Mecca, assisted by the government; the Prime Minister hailed as a holy man after his escape from an air accident, and camels sacrificed for him in the streets of Ankara and Istanbul. In Ceylon and Burma the strength of the Buddhist faith is seen in its reaction against privilege in education and government. In both Hinduism and Islam reforms are proceeding against caste, polygamy, and the like; that will make it impossible for the Christian to point an accusing finger at social abuses that were not necessarily implied in the religion, but made good debating points in the past.

"It is, then, no longer possible to ignore the existence of non-Christian religions or the reforms taking place in them. Recogni-

tion of this fact is essential for Christian missions, but also for the church as a whole. The hard fact of the existence of different faiths, to which hundreds of millions of our fellow human beings are devoted, must be recognized. "The evangelization of the world in this generation," once the bold cry of the Student Christian Movement, has not been realized in any more than the general sense of preaching the Gospel in nearly every land and making groups of converts in the more favorable ones. This is not meant to deny the missionary task of the church, which has been implicit since the first century, but different methods are needed; and certainly it must be seen that Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the like are here to stay, at least yet for centuries.

"If we are judged by conduct, Christians have often been in error. When the World Peace Pagoda was opened in Rangoon in 1956, it was said that Western Christianity had proved itself a warlike faith, and the world needed Buddhism as the religion of peace. Someone has said recently that Russia need not spend money on anti-American propaganda in Asia; Hollywood does it much better for them. The cheap American films that flood Asia depict Western life as vulgar luxury, gross sensuality, and unrestrained violence. If that is the American way of life, and America is a Christian country [in the eyes of Oriental non-Christian peoples], then Hinduism or Buddhism are better religions by the fruits they produce. At least it is salutary to see ourselves as others see us."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

Corby, England. — English-speaking congregations associated with the Lutheran Council of Great Britain now have a national church organization for the first time.

The United Lutheran Synod in Great

Britain was formed at a constituting assembly here on April 16. Elected its first chairman was the Rev. William B. Schaeffer of London, a pastor of the United Lutheran Church in America, who serves as the Lutheran World Federation's senior representative in the United Kingdom.

Official delegates at the assembly represented a small constituency — only four fully organized congregations with a combined membership of about 300. However, the council's English-language congregational work is growing rapidly, and the step taken here is expected to provide a strong impetus to wider development.

Congregations associated with the 12-year-old council have a total constituency of some 32,000. But until recent years they have worshiped almost entirely in other European languages, since their people were first-generation immigrants or refugees from the continent. About ten such foreign languages are now used by Lutheran congregations in Great Britain, and Lutheran synodical organizations already exist among such diaspora groups as the Germans, Latvians, Estonians, and Poles. These synodical bodies are all larger than the new English-speaking one.

"The need for an English-language synod has been felt by members of the council for many years," Mr. Schaeffer said. "The synod will sponsor joint work in English in areas of Lutheran strength as a means of fostering local co-operation and providing a means to serve future generations of Lutherans."

Financial help for the development of English-language Lutheran work in England has been provided by the LWF Department of World Service, chiefly through the support of U. S. Pastors Schaeffer, Wegener, Stumme, Swantz, and others, who have served in the same posts. Mr. Schaeffer also serves a small English-speaking Lutheran group at High Wycombe.

The federation is also underwriting a new

English ministry begun last year at Birmingham by a Latvian theological graduate, Aleksandrs Monstovics, and is assisting in the joint establishment of further English work in the Bradford-Leeds area by young Lutheran pastors of several continental nationalities.

Chicago. — The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago has been chosen as the name of the new seminary being planned through consolidation of existing institutions of the four church bodies merging to form the Lutheran Church in America. The proposed school will succeed Augustana Theological Seminary of the Augustana Lutheran Church, Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary of the United Lutheran Church in America, Grand View Seminary of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church and Suomi Theological Seminary of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Suomi Synod).

An interseminary committee planning the consolidation announced here that the new institution will probably begin to function formally by January 1963.

The exact location of the seminary has not been determined, though it has been decided that none of the present locations will be permanently maintained. Augustana's school is presently at Rock Island, Ill., and the Grand View and Suomi seminaries are affiliated with Chicago Lutheran at Maywood, Ill. The committee announced that establishment of the seminary near a university is being considered, but that until adequate facilities can be provided on a single site the institution will function on campuses at both Maywood and Rock Island.

Articles of consolidation and a constitution adopted in March by the interseminary committee are now being forwarded to boards of the four schools and the merging churches for action this spring and summer. If the documents are approved, it is expected the first board of directors of the new school will be elected by the fall of 1962. An enrollment of approximately 500 is

contemplated at the school, which will offer a broad curriculum.

In addition to an undergraduate program leading to the B.D. degree, plans call for graduate courses for master's and doctoral degrees, a program for laymen preparing for service in the church, and continuation of the School of Missions now affiliated with Chicago Lutheran and supported by the ULCA and Augustana.

Augustana Theological Seminary, founded by Swedish Lutheran immigrants, was established in 1860 in Chicago, moved to Paxton, Ill., in 1863, and to Rock Island in 1875. The institution was named Augustana College and Theological Seminary in 1869 and existed as such until 1948, when the college and seminary became separate corporations.

Chicago Lutheran was founded in 1891 on the north side of Chicago and in 1910 was moved to Maywood. The school was established by the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church for the preparation of English-speaking ministers for the Lutheran Church. When the ULCA, of primarily German background, was formed in 1918 it assumed ownership and control.

The Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church established Grand View Seminary in northwestern Wisconsin in 1886. In following years doctrinal differences divided the seminary and eventually the church, and in 1896 the part known as the Danish Lutheran Church (now AELC) established Grand View College and Seminary at Des Moines, Iowa. The college and seminary were separated in 1952, and at its 1959 convention the AELC voted to affiliate the seminary with Chicago Lutheran, effective in September 1960.

Suomi College and Theological Seminary was founded in 1896 in Hancock, Mich., by the Suomi Synod. In 1957 the college and seminary were separated, and steps were taken to affiliate the seminary with some larger institution of one of the churches

merging into the LCA. The following year a proposal recommending affiliation with Chicago Lutheran was adopted, and the seminary began operations on the Maywood campus in September 1958.

Waverly, Iowa. A one-year leave of absence has been granted Dr. Karl T. Schmidt, chairman of Wartburg College's Christianity department here, to serve as a theological assistant in editing the new *Lutheran Encyclopedia*. He will work with Dr. Julius Bodensieck, professor of theology at Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, who has been engaged in the project since 1954.

The new encyclopedia, expected to total some two million words, is being published under the auspices of the Lutheran World Federation. A grant of \$10,000 from the Lutheran Brotherhood, fraternal life insurance society, is underwriting the editing of the work.

Dr. Bodensieck worked part time on the project for several years until last fall, when arrangements were made with Wartburg Seminary to secure his services on a full-time basis for 24 months. Dr. Schmidt is scheduled to leave Wartburg College Aug. 1.

It has been hoped the encyclopedia might be completed by the LWF's Helsinki assembly in the summer of 1963, though Dr. Bodensieck has expressed doubts that this will be possible. He requested editorial assistance to speed completion of the work.

The project is expected to result in the most comprehensive and definite international reference work on Lutheran interests, doctrine, and action. Articles are being contributed by more than 700 authorities on such subjects as church history, church polity, theology, liturgy, church art, Lutheran activities in missions, relief and other works of mercy. The Augsburg Publishing House in Minneapolis has agreed to publish the English-language edition. A German edition is also planned.

Loccum, West Germany.—Here Lutheran

theologians and educators from 12 nations criticized the common view that the church rite of confirmation signifies an adolescent's admission to "full" or "adult" membership in the Christian church. Five American Lutherans were among the 40 participants in an international seminar on confirmation sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation, which further rejected the interpretation that confirmation "completes what was begun in Baptism" or that it "marks the termination of a Christian's religious education."

At the four-day meeting ending April 21 they voiced agreement that full and complete membership in the church of Christ comes with Baptism alone. The theologians stressed that for Lutherans confirmation is simply a "baptismal remembrance" — to both the confirmand and the congregation before which he stands a reminder of what happened to them on the day of Baptism. They contrasted this theological concept with that of Roman Catholicism on the one hand, which sees confirmation as completing the grace of Baptism, and with that of certain Protestants on the other, which belittles Baptism by overemphasizing the later personal confession of faith.

They acknowledged that the Lutheran position as they defined it weakened the traditionally strong tie between confirmation and admission to Holy Communion, since every baptized child is entitled to commune, at least theoretically. They noted that in practice the church could refrain from giving boys and girls their first Communion until they had been adequately instructed as to its meaning. But some advocated that the first Communion age should be around 8 or 10 instead of on completion of confirmation preparation at 15.

The seminar was organized by the LWF Commission on Education with the cooperation of the Commission on Theology. It was part of a five-year study on confirmation the former is engaged in at the request of the federation's Minneapolis assembly of

1957. It is to be completed in time for a final report to be given at the Helsinki assembly in 1963. In this connection, the lectures and findings of the Loccum seminar will be widely circulated for study.

Oslo. — Strong protests are still voiced in some circles over the recent ordination of the first woman pastor of the (Lutheran) Church of Norway. The Oslo Christian daily *Vart Land* has accused the government of causing a grave situation in the church by authorizing the ordination of Mrs. Ingrid Bjerkas, a 59-year-old theological graduate whose first applications for vacant pastorates were turned down by several parishes. This was like "throwing a flaming torch straight at the altar," a *Vart Land* editorial charged. The paper also emphasized the responsibility of Bishop Kristian Schjelderup of Hamar in officiating on March 19 at the ordination of Mrs. Bjerkas.

The new ordinand, a widow with three grandchildren was finally appointed by the government, on her application, to the parish of Berg on the island of Senja, southwest of Tromsø. The parish is in the North Hålogaland diocese of Bishop Alf Wiig, who had stated earlier that he would "extend a hearty welcome to any woman pastor."

The Bergen Christian daily *Dagen* likewise objected to the precedent-setting move. Other papers were divided. Some expressed hearty approval of the action as a demonstration of broad-mindedness and tolerance, while others counseled caution in breaking with ancient church traditions.

The Central Board of the Clergymen's Association for Bible and Confession published a statement characterizing the ordination of Mrs. Bjerkas as something forced on the church from the outside. The board contended that it went against the whole tradition of the church and the will of the vast majority of its members. It described as an act of disloyalty the assent of "certain churchmen" to introducing women into the

ministry. Except for purely administrative dealings, the people were urged to refrain from any kind of co-operation with a woman pastor. At the same time church members were asked by the board to work for a re-organization of the diaconate of women, which provides for a wide variety of full-time church services by trained but unordained persons.

The legal ban on the admission of women to the ministry of the national church was lifted by Parliament before the last war. However, there remained a proviso that women could be appointed to pastoral posts only where they were accepted by the local church council. An amendment removing this restriction was passed in 1956.

In the Church of Norway, including its local church councils, there has been stiff opposition to women clergy. For this reason this country's more than 40 women theological graduates have not previously applied for pastoral posts or ordination. Mrs. Bjerkas became the first after completing her studies last year.

The relative strength of the opposition, as compared with that in Sweden, is reflected in the fact that six of Norway's nine Lutheran bishops have made a strong joint declaration against the recent move involving Mrs. Bjerkas. In Sweden, where the law permitting women's ordination is much more recent, the majority of the Lutheran bishops now accept it, at least in principle.

One of the three Norwegian bishops consenting to the acceptance of women pastors, Bishop Wiig, will retire on Sept. 1, leaving the supervision of Mrs. Bjerkas' work to his successor, not yet named.

The acceptance of women pastors by Bishop Tord Godal of Nidaros (Trondheim) is one of principle only. For practical reasons he has expressed the opinion that the time is not ripe. "An ordination (of a woman), with the consequences it involves," he said, "will in practice cause many

difficulties. It will constitute an interference in the order of the church and a break in a national tradition which is nearly 1,000 years old."

Berlin. — Completion of a new official collection of rites and ceremonies for this country's Lutheran pastors was announced here in mid-April at the general synod meeting of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD). The three-volume *Agenda*, a guide for the liturgical conduct of public worship and occasional ministerial services, has been in preparation for the past 12 years. During that period, its editors examined no less than 2,000 different requests and suggestions which individuals and groups within the churches, in response to a general invitation, had submitted.

Berlin. — Leaders of the German Lutheran territorial churches pleaded not guilty here in mid-April to "the oft-repeated reproach of confessionalism" that has been directed against them. The charge that they stress their Lutheranism too much in their relations with other Protestants "is not justified," asserted the synod of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD).

The role of Lutherans in the broader Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) both now and in the past shows clearly that "we sought the common road and we still seek it," the synod stated. But it made plain that it did not take this to mean that there should no longer exist any Lutheran Church. On this point it repeated the assertion made by Presiding Bishop Hanns Lilje in his report at the opening of the four-day meeting: "A Lutheran Church has existed and still exists not only in Germany but in the whole world."

These words, the synod said, have reference not simply to the fact that the Lutheran Church is found in all parts of the globe but also to the particular tasks which history

assigned to Lutheranism and which it must not shirk.

New York. — Dr. Hans-Werner Gensichen, a Lutheran professor at Heidelberg University in Germany, has been appointed an associate director of the Theological Education Fund of the International Missionary Council to take charge of a special program in Africa for the training of ministers and lay leaders. He has been granted a three-year leave of absence from the university and will arrive in New York in April to assume the new position.

The program to be supervised by Dr. Gensichen is expected to operate on a budget of approximately \$150,000 a year for the next five years. Several international church bodies are underwriting the venture, which is being administered by the TEF but is separate from its regular program. The TEF is an international interdenominational organization started in 1948. It provides higher theological training for ministers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The special program in Africa is being started in recognition of pressing needs there for theological education assistance. Special institutes for seminary professors, training of lay leaders, consultation with heads of theological schools, production of a journal of theology and programs to increase the effectiveness of theological libraries are planned.

The National Lutheran Council, acting on a request from its Division of Lutheran World Federation Affairs, has authorized an annual contribution of \$13,300 for five years toward the special Africa program. The funds will be provided from reserves of Lutheran World Action, the annual financial appeal of NLC participating bodies.

Dr. Gensichen, who will spend approximately half of the next three years in Africa, will make his headquarters at TEF offices in the Interchurch Center, 475 Riverside Dr., New York City.