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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

ISSUES AND TRENDS IN AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY

Under this heading Dr. Wm. W. Manross, professor of church history at the Philadelphia Divinity School, publishes in the *Anglican Theological Review* (July 1962) a number of views on religious trends in our country, based on books and articles of older and more recent writers on the subject. We quote a few of these as worthy of careful consideration.

"At first glance the present scene in American Church History appears to be a very pleasant one, full of bright promise for the future. For several years the American churches have been undergoing, and they still seem to be undergoing, a notable revival. The question which the historian has to answer is: A revival of what? Of religion? Of church membership? Of —?"

"Piety, if the reader will pardon the cliché, is the operative word, for it is a word of many meanings, extending from the deepest religious feeling, through a more superficial religiosity, to a mere reverence for approved institutions. The problem is to decide under which of these shades the current surge of piety is to be understood. . . . Are we, in fact, witnessing not the revival of Christianity, but its transformation into the cult of the American ethos?"

"The idea that we are living in a post-Christian age, which has become almost a commonplace in English and European intellectual circles, seems less obvious here with our impressive statistics of church membership. If the current revival is really a revival of Christianity, we should be led to conclude that the post-Christian era has been at least postponed in the United States, but Vahanian (Gabriel Vahanian, *The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era*) argues

with considerable cogency that it is already with us. The argument rests mainly on the lack of Christian orientation in our thinking or our value judgments."

"While the aim of changing people's lives is professed by all revivalists, the evidence of change was much stronger in earlier revivals."

"The basic intellectual factor in making this the post-Christian era is the ascendancy of scientific naturalism over men's minds."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

A ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW OF NON-ROMAN CATHOLIC MATRIMONIAL ETHICS

The Rev. Hans Dieter Schelauke, a Roman Catholic priest in Niehl, a suburb of Cologne, Germany, summarizes a 23-page article, "Die Beurteilung des *usus matrimonii* in der protestantischen Ethik," in the Münster quarterly *Catholica*, Vol. XVI, No. 3 (1962), pp. 209—231, in these concluding words: "Early Protestantism [by which Schelauke understands both the Lutheran Church and the Reformed churches] was able to emancipate itself from the Augustinian depreciation of sexuality only very slowly. Marriage was regarded as a remedy for the weak and found its primary purpose in the procreation of offspring. The significance of marriage as the most comprehensive and intimate community of life for two persons appeared only gradually. Karl Barth finally identifies matrimonial togetherness (*Miteinander*) as the real purpose of sexuality. In order to give this personal purpose of marriage its just due, Protestant writers abandon the superordination of the procreation of offspring as the primary end of marriage over mutual help as the secondary end. Some of them content themselves with coordinating both ends of marriage, while others so stress matrimonial

togetherness that the procreation of offspring must take a place behind the former. The consequence of this change in the relative importance of the ends of marriage is that, once the essential significance of marriage seems to have been achieved by a two-in-oneness (*Zweieinigkeit*), the prevention of further pregnancies can be achieved as well by artificial, that is, chemical or mechanical, means as by observance of sterile days, that is, by natural means, since naturalness (*Natürlichkeit*) cannot be made a decisive criterion of ethical permissibility in the realm of Protestant theology. The real chasm between the [Roman] Catholic and the Protestant conceptions lies precisely here. Accordingly Protestant ethics does not regard birth control as ethically reprehensible because of the means employed, but only in cases where an egoistic attitude would preclude the gift of children with which God has blessed marriage. The permissibility of birth control is made to depend upon the presence of grave reasons for a limitation of family size. One can *not* accuse Protestant ethics of enmity toward children (*Kinderfeindlichkeit*). The vulnerability of Protestant matrimonial ethics lies in its doctrine of the purposes of marriage and its willingness to admit *all* means to achieve the end of birth limitations." (P. 231)

ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

Skalholt, Iceland. — The new Lutheran cathedral in Skalholt, under construction for the past several years, will be consecrated next summer, Bishop Sigurbjörn Einarsson announced at a press conference here.

Skalholt was the seat of the first bishop of Iceland from 1050 to 1080, but in later times

the head of the National Church has been resident at the capital, Reykjavik.

Bishop Einarsson also announced that the country's two suffragan bishops, who now both live in Reykjavik, will henceforth be located one at Skalholt and the other at Holar.

Excavations for the new cathedral have revealed an underground passage through which school children went to church in bad weather 800 years ago.

Some 166,000 Icelanders — about 90 percent of the national population — are Lutherans.

Geneva. — Six choirs of the United States, Sweden, and Germany have been invited by the Finnish Committee on Arrangements to sing at the Lutheran World Federation's Helsinki assembly next summer.

The American choirs will be from two Lutheran institutions of higher learning, Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pa., and Suomi College in Hancock, Mich. Also invited are the Uppsala choir and the Vadstena Festival Choir from Sweden and the choir of the Hannover territorial church school of music and the Westphalian singers of Herford, Germany.

Helsinki. — A record total of approximately 900 theology students are now enrolled at the University of Helsinki. Newly admitted theological students at the university this autumn totaled 186, almost exactly the same number as last year. To date, the most who entered in any one year were the 205 who enrolled in 1960.

This year's 87 women students constitute 47 percent of the entering class, as compared with the 68 who were 36 percent of the 1961 class, and the 99 who were 48 percent of the 1960 one.