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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

MISSION ACTIVITY IN CHICAGO

A pastoral letter from the Rev. James G. Manz informs his parishioners that four Moslems recently attended the Sunday evening vesper service at First St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Three of the group also attended the Wednesday evening adult inquiry class. The two men were evidently born, trained, and educated in Mohammedan culture. The two women, however, were both converts to Islam — one was a former Methodist and the other a former Lutheran (Missouri Synod). These people came to First St. Paul's — not to observe in an open-minded manner, nor to engage in true dialog but to convert Christians to their faith, the pastor or any members whom they would be able to win. They were intelligent, well educated, informed, assertive, and bold in an almost unbearable manner. They were absolutely sure of their position.

After the Sunday evening vespers they expressed strong objections to the crucifix on the altar. They repeatedly claimed that they believe in Jesus Christ — yet they denied His deity and all vestiges of orthodox Christian and Biblical teaching concerning our Lord and Savior.

Shukar Ilahi Husain, the leader of the group, said that he is the director of the U.S. Islamic missions in the midwestern states. These people are *not in any way* connected with the "Black Muslim" groups. In response to questioning, he also said he and his work are supported by a group within Islam with headquarters in West Pakistan. The telephone directory lists his office as "The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam-Mosque."

Husain claimed that since coming to Chicago he has gained approximately 30 converts in the area. He also maintained that these people were not "fringe Christians"

but actual church members at the time of their conversion to Islam. Mr. Husain hopes that he will be able to establish a mosque here in Chicago. He estimates that at the present time there are roughly 1,000,000 Moslems in the United States. The Islamic group glories in the fact that their fellow religionists are gaining far more than the Christians in Africa.

"This encounter was a unique, shaking, and sobering experience," according to Pastor Manz. "In my years at First St. Paul's I have counseled with a former Communist, and I have met with "fellow-travelers," Jews, Buddhists, "free-thinkers," anti-clericals, etc. Never before, however, have I met with people of such militant, assertive, and hostile views towards Christ and Christians. These people are extremely anti-Christian. They are determined to win Christians away from the church to what they regard as the true faith.

"There are several Buddhist congregations that are now fairly well established in the city of Chicago. One of them near here is in the heart of Old Town, just north and west of First St. Paul's. Our people are going to be encountering non-Christians in greater numbers.

"There is a warning in all of this. For years missionaries have been warning of the rising tide of the old non-Christian religions — Islam, Buddhism, Shintoism, etc. Inner-city pastors have seen the beginning of new anti-clerical, anti-Christian, and other hostile forces in our land. This experience has shown again that we Christians are going to have to be better informed, stronger in our faith in Christ, more knowledgeable in the Scriptures, and more fearless and clear in our confession. It may even be that the church is going to lose some ground and be stripped of some of its earthly prerogatives, powers,

and wealth. Yet Christ will grant new spiritual strength!"

Chicago, Ill.

REPORT FROM THE NIHON RUTERU KYODAN

The annual delegate convention of the Nihon Ruteru Kyodan (mission church related to The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod) voiced its approval of the agreement presented by the joint committee consisting of members of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Nihon Ruteru Kyodan, on cooperation in theological education. Upon ratification of this agreement by the JELC, the two bodies will embark on a program of theological education in which they will cooperate in the use of facilities, faculty, etc.

The convention of the Nihon Ruteru Kyodan also went on record as receiving the invitation to pulpit and altar fellowship with the JELC with joy. The matter is being referred to the churches of the Nihon Ruteru Kyodan for their discussion. A definite answer is to be given to the JELC in the fall.

In another significant action the convention also voted to have the church become self-governing in 1969. In preparation for this the executive committee of the Nihon Ruteru Kyodan will meet with the executive committee of the Japan Mission, The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (the present governing body), as observers from 1965 to 1967. In 1967 both committees will work together in guiding the young church, and in 1969 the Japanese will have complete control.

At its meeting the convention also voted to initiate a project to send two Japanese Christian doctors to India in 1967 to aid the India Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The executive committee of the Japan Mission, The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod voted in April to begin discussions on the initiation of a joint Lutheran English

congregation to aid in serving the English-speaking population of Tokyo. The talks between the Japan Mission of the LCMS and the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, the major Lutheran body in Japan, will follow the following lines:

1. The congregation to be established shall seek the recognition and support of both the LCMS and the JELC.
2. Members from either body may seek membership in the congregation. This does not mean, however, that the congregation becomes a part of the JELC or the LCMS, but it remains "independent," having its own constitution.
3. The constitution of the congregation is to be approved by the recognizing bodies.

A joint constitution committee has been established, and talks are scheduled to begin soon.

Tokyo Union Theological Seminary (Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan) has decided to accept the offer of International Christian University to move its campus to ICU, and will begin making the move in the near future. If the Lutherans also put their seminary on the ICU campus, present plans call for the two seminaries to be right next to each other.

Tokyo, Japan HENRY R. SCHRIEVER

**CHRISTIANITY'S ASIAN BASTION —
A REPORT FROM THE PHILIPPINES**

1965 marks the four hundredth anniversary of Christianity in the Philippines. The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in this country has declared it a jubilee year, and has set various programs and projects to celebrate the anniversary. Even the automobile license plates for this year bear the reminder that 1965 is "Christianization's 4th Centennial."

The main attraction of the year was the week-long quadricentennial celebration from April 27 to May 3 in Cebu City, the chief

city of the central islands of the Philippines. April 27 marks the date, 400 years ago, when the image of the Santo Nino, or Holy Child, was found in Cebu by members of the Legazpi expedition, miraculously intact after having been abandoned 40 years previously by Magellan, who had presented it to a native princess upon her conversion, before he himself was killed and his followers forced to flee. That Christianity managed to take root and to flourish with the coming of the expedition of 1565 is attributed to the peculiar power of the Santo Nino, still today Cebu's patron saint. During the recent quadricentennial celebrations, it is estimated that more than a million people visited the city, which under normal circumstances holds a little more than 250,000. Among these visitors was Pope Paul VI's personal representative, Cardinal Antoniutti of Italy, along with 32 bishops from 13 other countries.

The Philippines claim, and with reason, to be the only Christian country in the Far East. Out of a total population of 30 million people, 92% are listed in the latest census figures as Christian. Since the Protestant churches can claim less than 3% for themselves, and the Philippine Independent Church, a turn-of-the-century break-off from the Roman Catholic Church, claims only a little more than 5%, this means that 84% of all Filipinos are Roman Catholic. There is thus little room for argument as to whose is the voice of Christianity in the Philippines — the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy.

In view of these statistics, it is an interesting commentary on the state of interchurch relations in the Philippines to note that the current quadricentennial observances have led to no action on the part of the Roman Catholic hierarchy either to extend invitations to other Christian denominations in the country to take part in the anniversary celebrations, or even to make some kind of public recognition of the existence of such de-

nominations. Most Protestant groups took advantage of the opportunity to issue statements of various kinds indicating their individual reactions to the current celebrations.

On an unofficial level, contacts between Roman and non-Roman Christians have been following, albeit at a distance, patterns still being set in Europe and in the United States. On an official level, however, these contacts have been met, for the most part, with silent (at least to outside ears), but still official, disapproval on the part of the hierarchy. The Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, who exerts no little authority throughout the country, is considered to be very conservative. He has been quoted as saying in a recent pastoral letter on the new liturgy that the faithful "should not be carried away by individual enthusiasm; let us not make changes for the sake of change, just because other countries or ecclesiastical jurisdictions are making such changes. On the contrary, we must effect such changes as are deemed necessary reflectively, consciously, and in consonance with call to prudence by duly constituted authorities." But, on the other hand, he has also been quoted as having said, "If it [presumably, change] comes, I shall not stand in the way."

There are exceptions, however, to the general rule of official coolness on the part of the hierarchy. Last December, at a meeting of the Asian Christian Youth Assembly held at the large Protestant Silliman University in Dumaguete City, the Bishop of Dumaguete himself addressed the delegates with an eloquent call for Christian unity. In October 1964, a discussion group was organized which includes representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Philippine Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the Methodist Church, the Philippine Independent Church, and others. The annual so-called Baguio Religious Acculturation Conferences have been held regularly over the past several years. Although study and discussion at these conferences has cen-

tered around various aspects of Philippine culture rather than on strictly theological questions, the meetings have done much to wear away more than half a century of mutual suspicion and fear between the Roman Church and Protestantism here.

The Lutheran Church in the Philippines, the Missouri Synod's daughter in this country, has been under a double disadvantage over the years in its often feeble attempts to speak to other Christians in the Philippines. In the first place, Lutheran work began here only in 1947; this late start over against the Protestant groups, most of whom came with the Americans at the turn of the century, has tended to make Lutherans feel as though they were on the outside looking in. LCP's second handicap has been the hesitancy with which Missouri Synod Lutherans have established meaningful contacts, on a church-to-church basis, with Christians of other denominations, coupled with that uncomfortable feeling of being in unfamiliar territory whenever circumstances have brought us into contacts of this nature. It has only been within the past five years, perhaps as a result of Missouri's own rethinking of the nature of the church's mission to the world, that LCP has begun to see her mission in relation to the non-Lutheran Christian groups represented in this country, and particularly in relation to the Roman Catholic Church. LCP, till now the only Lutheran church in the entire country, has begun to realize that other groups both need to hear and are ready to listen to the voice of a confessionally-oriented church body. It has sometimes been a pleasant surprise to see with what genuine interest and respect others have been willing to listen to the Lutherans, who speak with a voice often disproportionately strong, in view of LCP's baptized membership of only 6,000.

On the other hand, LCP has also had her eyes opened in a number of other ways: she has learned, as in the Baguio Religious Acculturation Conferences, that there is no

shortage of scholarship in other circles, particularly Roman Catholic. Especially in the area of Philippine life and culture, the experience and scholarly research found in the older churches has proved to be an invaluable source of new insights and information for the young LCP. On the other side of the coin has been the sometimes shattering discovery that, even from a theological standpoint, we Lutherans are not always as well prepared for interchurch contacts as we like to think we are. This has been the experience of many, particularly in dealings with Roman Catholics.

The Lutheran Church in the Philippines has attempted to show this new feeling of responsibility and friendship towards the other churches with a statement prepared to commemorate this year's quadricentennial celebrations. The statement has been published in tract form and has also appeared as a paid advertisement in several periodicals with national coverage. The statement was, in summary, a call, first of all, to rejoice, for the fact that, for 400 years, Filipinos have been granted God's gift of forgiveness through Baptism; secondly, a call to repent, for the failure on the part of the whole country to take God's gifts seriously and to use them responsibly; and finally, a call to renewal, a rededication to our responsibilities as the only Christian country in the Orient.

It is in dealing with Protestant groups, however, that LCP's ecumenical contacts continue to produce more tangible results. From time to time, dialogs and panel discussions have been arranged. Lutheran participation in the translation work of the Philippine Bible house has been an important avenue of cooperation over the past years. Now it appears that two, even more substantial, cooperative endeavors are in the offing, pending the official approval of the whole of LCP. The first came to us in the form of an invitation from the Philippine Episcopal

Church, the Philippine Independent Church, and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines to participate in an experimental Faith and Life Community in Manila, along the lines of similar communities in the U. S. and Europe. LCP's South Luzon District, within whose area of jurisdiction Manila lies, has forwarded this invitation, with its endorsement, to the LCP's board of directors for official approval and the release of the necessary funds.

The second item, of even greater significance, is a report from a special committee of five, including the president of LCP, concerning possible membership in the newly reconstituted National Council of Churches in the Philippines. The committee's recommendation is that LCP apply for membership in the NCCP at the earliest possible time. The committee has suggested only one condition, namely, that LCP request that it be allowed to refrain, pending further study, from participating in the joint communion services which precede each general convention of the Council. The report has been

submitted to the congregations of LCP, and the hope is that a favorable decision will have been reached by November, when the next convention of the NCCP is scheduled to be held.

LCP's Future

LCP continues to be mindful of its commitment to preach and teach the Gospel in all its purity and to administer the sacraments according to their institution. But as members of the greater church, Lutherans in the Philippines are learning to share the joyful burden of the church's mission to the world with other Christians in the Philippines, who carry the same assignment by commission of the same Lord Jesus Christ. It is in this direction that the Holy Spirit may lead the Lutheran Church in the Philippines to discover its own unique contribution to the work of the church in this part of the world, and to help the Philippines, as a nation and as a people, to face its challenge as Christianity's outpost in Asia.

Lemery, Batangas GERALD E. WYNEKEN
Philippines