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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE LWF AND THE CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA

The *Australian Lutheran*, October 31, 1956, reports the action taken by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (in fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod) with regard to the question of the Lutheran World Federation. In protracted negotiations with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia the joint committees of both churches have given serious attention to the problem of membership in the LWF (cf. the report in this journal, November 1956, pp. 891ff.). The article gives the results of these discussions by quoting and referring to the minutes of these joint meetings. It then adds the changes in the constitution of the LWF which the ELCA suggests as well as the alterations suggested by the UELCA. We quote the article from this point to the end:

SUGGESTED ALTERATIONS TO LWF CONSTITUTION

I. *Name of Federation*

To be retained as at present.

II. *Doctrinal Basis*

To be deleted.

III. *Nature of Federation*

"The LWF shall be a free association of Lutheran Churches. It shall have no power to legislate for the Churches belonging to it or to interfere with their complete autonomy, but shall act as their agent in such matters as they assign to it within the scope of this Constitution." Mts. 28/7/55; Mts. 2/9/55.

Purpose: "The purposes of the LWF are:

- "(A) To promote mutual understanding and to cultivate unity of faith and confession among the Lutheran Churches of the world with the aim of reaching a degree of unity of faith and confession, which justifies the establishing of church fellowship between the member churches;
- "(B) To promote co-operation in study among the Lutherans;
- "(C) To bear witness before the world to the truth of God's Word as confessed and taught in the Lutheran Confessions on the basis and within the scope of such unity as exists between the member churches;

- “(D) To supply material aid to all men in need, especially to Lutherans;
- “(E) To arrange for spiritual aid, to be given in keeping with Scriptural and confessional principles, especially to Lutheran groups in need. Mts. 2/9/55.
- “(F) To foster a common Lutheran attitude and action regarding missions and education on the basis of sound Lutheran principles. Mts. 13/10/55.
- “(G) To study the relationship of Lutheran Churches to non-Lutheran churches and organizations and ecumenical movements, to seek to define the proper Lutheran attitude, and to encourage member-churches to act accordingly.” Mts. 17/11/55.

IV. *Membership*

“All autonomous Lutheran Churches are eligible for membership, whose constitution acknowledges the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only sound and infallible norm of all Christian doctrine and practice and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, or at least the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism, as the pure exposition of the Word of God, and who declare their adherence to this Constitution.

“No church shall be eligible for membership which is incorporated in a non-Lutheran Church. Mts. 2/9/55.

“Acceptance into membership shall be decided by the LWF in Assembly by not less than a two-thirds majority. Any application for membership between meetings of the Assembly shall be considered by the Executive Committee: if the application is supported by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Executive Committee present and voting, this action shall be communicated to the churches that are members of the LWF and, if approval is received from no less than two-thirds of the member churches within six months, the applicant shall be declared elected.” Mts. 17/11/55.

Rest of constitution remains.

The Joint Committee on October 13, 1955, through its president general, requested the UELCA to submit these proposed alterations to the Executive of the LWF at its meeting in Madras in January 1956. This was done by Dr. Lohe. The proposals were not discussed by the Executive but referred to its constitutional committee. The last general

convention of the UELCA at Walla resolved to suggest the following alterations:

- (1) That the Lutheran World Federation consider whether the present "doctrinal basis" clause does not endanger the federation character of the Lutheran World Federation. It is suggested that the principles expressed in this paragraph be so worded that they apply to the member churches, both as a clause of eligibility for membership and as a clause defining the confessional responsibility of the member churches in their activities within the Federation.
- (2) That if point (1) is acceptable, the constitution of the Lutheran World Federation also embody a clause to safeguard the confessional character of the operations of the Federation as such.
- (3) That provision be made in the constitution of the Lutheran World Federation for procedure in informing member churches of applications for membership in the Federation, whereby the opportunity is offered for member churches to raise fundamental objections.
- (4) That the Lutheran World Federation consider the re-wording of Clause III 2 (a) of the constitution in order to avoid the ambiguity of the phrase "united witness," and of the Clause III 2 (b) in order to avoid the ambiguity of the phrase "foster participation."

The convention also decided to forward these to the executive of the LWF with explanatory notes in a covering letter.

Both churches have agreed to await the action of the LWF on these proposals at its next assembly in Minneapolis in 1957.

On behalf of the intersynodical committees,

W. R. R.

S. P. Hebart F. J. H. Blaess

WHY A WORLD CONCLAVE OF LUTHERANS?

[ED. NOTE: The following article was written by Dr. E. Clifford Nelson and appeared in the *News Bureau* of the National Lutheran Council.]

"Just what do you expect to achieve by this convention?" is what one man asked at a preliminary discussion of the 1957 Assembly. Indeed, why meet in Minneapolis or any other place as a conclave of world Lutherans? This question cannot be answered without a preliminary review and interpretation of past Assemblies.

Needs Met by First Assembly

No Christian communion was so deeply and critically wounded by World War II and its immediate consequences as was the church of the Augsburg Confession. The stench and weariness of total war and the shadow of another liberty-denying power hung over the First Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation held at Lund, Sweden, in the summer of 1947.

The emaciated delegates from Germany and the prophetic voice of Bishop Ordass, of Hungary, were stark reminders of the post-war character of the Lund Assembly. It faced two directions: toward the past to repair the wounds in the Body of Christ; toward the future to evaluate the possibility of a united Lutheran testimony in a dividing world.

At this First Assembly Lutheran representatives from the victorious countries, such as the U. S. A. and Canada, met together with men and women from neutral Sweden, vanquished Germany, occupied Norway and Denmark. Moreover, delegates from churches-in-exile of Russian-conquered Baltic countries, from Communist-dominated Poland and Hungary reminded all that the Lutheran Church was living in tension. The theme of this assembly was "The Lutheran Church in the World Today."

It was at Lund that the old Lutheran World Convention, organized at Eisenach, Germany, was reorganized as the Lutheran World Federation, with constitutionally stated purposes:

1. to bear united witness before the world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the power of God for salvation;
2. to cultivate unity and faith and confession among Lutheran churches;
3. to promote fellowship and cooperation in study among Lutherans;
4. to foster Lutheran participation in ecumenical movements;
5. to develop a united Lutheran approach to responsibilities in missions and education;
6. to support Lutheran groups in need of spiritual and material aid.

Most immediate of these stated purposes was the last, for already a flow of money and goods was being channeled through Geneva from the "haves" to the "have nots." War-orphaned missions were assisted with personnel, money, and materials. Churches grew out of the rubble. Service to refugees—millions of them—expressed the Savior's compassion. Lund set in motion and implemented a massive demonstration of unity in faith and love.

Accomplishments of Second Assembly

In 1952, Hannover, Germany, was the site of the Second Assembly of the LWF. Delegates discussed Lutheran cooperation under the general theme, "The Living Word in a Responsible Church." The cordial hospitality of the German churches, the enthusiasm of overseas delegations, the large number of visitors, especially from America, and the vitality of the youth representatives were all indications that the Federation had won an abiding place in the affections of world Lutherans. To echo a voice heard at another world congress, the sentiment seemed to be, "We intend to stay together."

Recognizing this testimony of unity, the Hannover Assembly assessed the Federation's structure and re-shaped it along what promised to be permanent lines of action in the future. Thus LWF work in various fields was consolidated under four permanent departments and one permanent committee: Theology, World Missions, World Service, Information, and Latin America.

Task of Minneapolis Assembly

Minneapolis was chosen host city for the August 15—25, 1957, LWF Assembly meetings. This meeting of world Lutherans will best be anticipated by studying the experiences of Lund and Hannover, and by reflecting on the fact of the Federation's maturing program. In the first place, the time is now at hand to discuss the life of the churches in relation to the constitution's aims and purposes as expressed especially in items 2, 3 and 4. These three, properly understood, are implementations of item 1 ("to bear united witness before the world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the power of God for salvation").

In the second place, it is incumbent upon this Assembly to ask and seek to answer what this Assembly can mean (1) to the churches of free Europe, (2) to the churches in Kremlin-dominated countries, and (3) to American Lutheran churches seeking to find each other in merger movements.

The above problems, it seems, have already been summarized under the chosen theme, "Christ Frees and Unites." The Committee felt that the theme must touch the actual problems of world Lutheranism today: the unity of the church and church fellowship as consequent to Christian freedom through justification. Or, in other words, it must proclaim that the liberating "act of God in Christ is . . . an act that unites and also an act of deliverance from dividing disunity."

The goal and purpose, then, of the Minneapolis Assembly will be to guide the biblical-theological discussion to the natural consequences

of the theme; to face the questions of church fellowship and service by the church in the world. Difficult and embarrassing questions dare not be avoided or ambiguously answered. The implications of Christian fellowship, which reach out and involve not only fellow Lutherans but also other Christians in the ecumene, must be made apparent to the churches in the Lutheran family. But Christian freedom not only unites the churches in theory, it binds them in loving service. At this point the Minneapolis Assembly must ask itself, "How can the responsibility of the individual Christian, as well as the whole Church, be awakened to service, not only in the local congregation, but in the world?"

This, it seems, is the answer to the gentleman who asked, "Why this Assembly?"

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Chicago. — Representatives of four Lutheran church bodies discussing a merger met here and received a preliminary document which, they agreed, would serve as the basis for writing the doctrinal statement in the constitution of the proposed new church. The representatives constitute a Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity. The statement, entitled "The Word of God and the Confessions," was presented by Dr. Karl E. Mattson, president of the Augustana Lutheran Theological Seminary at Rock Island, Ill.

Involved in the merger scheme are the 2,270,000-member United Lutheran Church in America; the 536,000-member Augustana Lutheran Church; the 35,000-member Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (Suomi Synod); and the 20,000-member American Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The joint commission approved preliminary drafts of statements on the ministry, on seminaries and colleges. Responsibility in these areas will be centered in the constituent units, with shared authority granted to the central church body. Also approved by the commission was the creation of a subcommittee of four members to meet with representatives of the foreign mission boards of the four churches involved to draft a plan for a new board in the merged church. A similar committee was authorized to come up with a proposal for a new board of American (or home) missions. Other committees were authorized to study the number and duties of officers of the new church as well as its interim executive body and of a judiciary.

The commission heard preliminary reports on an organizational pattern for the new church, and proposals for geographical boundaries

of its constituent units—to be known as conferences, districts, or synods.

It deferred until September a reply to the Joint Union Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the American Lutheran Church, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, which had proposed a conference with the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity to “discuss the bases and possible plans for closer co-operation between all Lutheran bodies in America.”

Presiding at a meeting here was the commission’s chairman, Dr. Malvin H. Lundeen of La Grange, Ill., vice-president of the Augustana Lutheran Church. Present also as commissioners were the presidents of the four bodies seeking organic union: Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, New York, United Lutheran Church; Dr. Oscar Benson, Minneapolis, Augustana Lutheran Church; Dr. Alfred Jensen, Des Moines, Iowa, American Evangelical Lutheran Church; and Dr. Raymond W. Wargelin, Hancock, Mich., Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

Frankfurt am Main, Germany.—Pastor Martin Niemoeller has become involved with some German Lutheran leaders in a controversy over demands for “clear minority” rights for Lutherans in non-Lutheran churches in the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKID). He has opposed such demands. Dr. Niemoeller is president of the Evangelical Church of Hessen and Nassau, which belongs to the Evangelical Union (formerly the Old Prussian Union) Church. The EKID is a federation made up of Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches.

The controversy was stirred by a resolution adopted at a recent meeting in West Berlin of the management of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) demanding the minority rights. The VELKD leaders warned that otherwise the formation of further “free” Lutheran parishes would be unavoidable.

Pastor Niemoeller criticized the VELKD position as a threat to the unity of the EKID, which, he said, is now going “to face the test of its coherence and solidarity.” He reported in this connection that a leading representative of VELKD had participated in the recent dedication of a “free” Lutheran church in Kaiserslautern. And he charged this was contrary to an established policy of all EKID member churches not to support “free” parishes in the areas of other regional Evangelical churches.

The EKID must break apart, Pastor Niemoeller contended, if the VELKD seeks to divert it from this principle of solidarity.

Accra, Ghana.—Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, prime minister of the new state of Ghana, told a news conference here he will continue to welcome Christian missionaries into the country. "We owe a lot to missionaries," he said, adding that his people have become Western in their outlook and have no intention of joining the Afro-Asian bloc of Communist countries. Most members of Ghana's cabinet are products of mission schools, and 80 per cent of the children in these schools today are registered as Christians.

The Rev. Christian G. Baeta, chairman of the Christian Council of Ghana, also paid tribute to the missionaries. "Particularly would we remember with humble thanksgiving," he told the *African Challenge*, leading Protestant newspaper in West Africa, "the noble army of missionaries of the Gospel who, in selfless devotion, penetrated the deepest recesses of our land and of the lives of its people, bringing in the light of God, the light by which we now live."

Dr. Baeta, who is senior lecturer in theology at the University College in Ghana, stressed, however, the need to improve Christian instruction in the new nation. "The ordinary religious instruction given is very primitive," he said. "We teach young people basic Bible stories, but little instruction is given on how to carry Christianity into practical life. Only the Christians can give the moral instruction so vital to a young nation, and they must do this through literature."