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Editorials

Jottings from Helsinki

THE FOLLOWING is an impressionistic report on my trip to Helsinki this past summer as one of the observers to the Lutheran World Federation. The opinions here are personal and commit no one but the author. It is just an attempt to give a few impressions gained while in Scandinavia, and in England, with some of the lighter as well as the more serious sides of the trip.

England

The Archbishop of Canterbury describes England as ninety per cent pagan—in London there are many churches which are euphemistically described as "redundant" meaning that since there are so few people attending, the land on which the church stands is much more valuable for commercial property than for a church and that this building is scheduled for demolition—the upper classes belong to the Anglican Church largely but only half of them receive the right of confirmation, and only half of that group retains any active membership in the church—the lower classes historically belong to the dissenting groups and they have been largely alienated from the church. The Anglicans are very anxious to serve the people and hold services every day, noon-day services, four or five on Sunday, with evening services being particularly popular. The situation in Scotland is not greatly different, except that there Presbyterianism is dominant. One bright spot in our English trip was the meeting of the Lutheran Council of Great Britain, sponsored by our Evangelical Lutheran Church of England. George Pearce, chairman of our sister church in England, and his colleagues are doing an excellent job and are much to be commended. The Lutheran Council of Great Britain actually falls into three classes: first, our ELCE who are dedicated to the preaching of the gospel in English and the establishment of an indigenous church; second, the Eastern European Displaced Persons who operate largely in their native languages among displaced persons and are not quite sure whether they will ever be able to return to their native land, but as long as this hope flickers are not quite ready to settle down and become an English speaking indigenous church. The Poles are closest to our people and seemingly are in England to stay. The third group is Western European—Scandinavian and German pastors serving nationals of their countries in their native tongues. This group does not particularly identify itself with England and perhaps is almost as interested in close association with the Anglican Church as they are with their fellow Lutherans. Our meeting with the Lutheran Council was most interesting. We believe some rather useful results stemmed from this.

Norway

Three and one-half million people—ninety-eight per cent Lutheran—about twelve hundred pastors, making around three thousand parishioners per pastor. Three per cent generally attend church. Religion taught in the public schools in all the Scandinavian countries—Lutheran oriented and generally theologically biblical and confessional. The problem in all of Scandinavia seems to be a shortage of pastors, and a rather wide-spread antipathy toward the State Church which people feel exists out of their taxes but requires nothing meaningful of them. Throughout Scandinavia one feels that under the Socialist government they not only have womb to tomb security but perhaps eternal security with the State picking up all of the bills. The state takes care of you physically and spiritually from the time of the pre-existence of your soul until you are given your final send-off at State expense by the pastor of the State church. We met with several theologians in Norway and they were men of considerable confessional and biblical learning and solidarity. The Free Seminary in Norway, Menighet's Facultät, educates eighty per cent of the pastors in the State Church, thus exercising to some extent a salutary influence on theology in general.

Entirely too few churches throughout all of Scandinavia. The churches would hardly hold over ten per cent of the population of any of the large cities, and apparently are seldom filled despite the heated pews. Despite this the Norwegian Mission Society is the largest of its kind in the world, and Norway sends out more foreign missionaries per capita than any country in the world. A considerable amount of religious activity together with an apparent total apathy toward church attendance. Throughout the Northern Scandinavian countries there is very little crime and juvenile delinquency, but a great amount of public drunkenness, with the consequent reaction of total abstinence on the part of the "true believers."

Sweden

Seven million people—ninety-five per cent Lutheran—three thousand clergymen. A most interesting visit to Uppsala where we met Professor Harold Riesenfeld, a noted New Testament scholar on the faculty of the University there. Also an interesting visit with one of the pastors of the Cathedral. A city of eighty thousand, Uppsala has three churches. The Cathedral has fifty thousand members and ten pastors. Buried in a place of honor in the Cathedral is Nathan Söderblom, as is also Immanuel Swedenborg, together with several of the royalty of Sweden. Sweden is the most prosperous of the Scandinavian countries, as well as the largest, and consequently more materialistic than the others. Beautiful blue pews in the churches—lovely buildings—many of them built during the period of Gustav Vasa and Gustav Adolph. Attended two churches in Stockholm, and both were well filled. Services were

beautiful with lovely chanting and fine liturgical practices. No surplices and stoles—chasuble for communion—black gown in the pulpit.

Denmark

Three and one-half million people — ninety-eight per cent Lutheran, three per cent church attendance. Beautiful, like a page out of H. A. Andersen's fairy tales. Socialized to the hilt. Less opportunity to make observations of church life here. The beautiful Thorvaldsen statues of Christ and the Apostles in the Dom Church in Copenhagen—a visit to the beautiful cathedral at Aarhus—another church with Danish modern chairs for pews and lovely shiny bright brass fixtures—all this in a thirteenth century building. Pornography in every photography shop and on every newsstand and in many theatres. Tivoli with its lovely restaurants and free concerts well attended by the culture-loving and pleasure-loving Danes. The Gruntvig Church on the outskirts of Copenhagen which looks like an organ on the outside, and like a glorious cathedral on the inside. Church life seems to have very little effect and influence in Denmark, less than in the northern Scandinavian countries. This may be only an impression, but it is one which seems somewhat general.

Finland

Four and one-half million people—ninety-two per cent Lutheran—twelve hundred pastors—three per cent church attendance.

Helsinki—a beautiful city—dominated by the lovely century-old cathedral which is painted a pastel blue on the outside and had been newly painted white on the inside. The least ornate church we visited. The only decorations in the church were statues of Luther, Melancthon and Michael Agricola, a Finn who studied under Luther and brought Lutheranism back to his native land. Here as in all of the churches in Scandinavia was the traditional altar ring and a rather simple liturgical practice together with the most beautiful chanting we have ever heard anywhere. Supper one evening with the Bishop of Helsinki, Martti Simojoki, and Bishop Birkeli of Stavanger. Helsinki with four hundred and fifty thousand people has nine Lutheran churches and a Russian Orthodox Cathedral. The Lutheran diocese has six hundred thousand members and some two hundred parish pastors. One church per year is built in the diocese. There are now forty-eight churches serving in the diocese. Finland has eight Lutheran bishops and one Russian Orthodox bishop. The entire province of Finnish Lapland, an area eighty miles wide and one hundred miles long has one church—a million dollar building—put up by money from Lutheran World Federation. The Finns don't like many churches but they like them big and beautiful, and they are. Despite the Russian military alliance, Finland is extremely pro-western and every effort was made to use the Lutheran World Federation as a

way of confessing the fact that this was a Christian country. A rally on the last day drew twenty thousand people to the Olympic stadium in Helsinki. The issuance of commemorative postage stamps—the appearance of the President, both in the opening procession and in a public address to the group, as well as a reception in his home, together with many manifestations of interest in the press and radio—all bore witness to the fact that Finland was saying, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” It is this writer’s opinion that this was one of the most valuable aspects of the LWF meeting.

It was interesting to see the array of personalities who were present. Lindbeck and Skydsgaard, the observers of the Vatican Council, Bishops Lilje, Meyer of Lübeck, Manikam of India, Giertz of Sweden, Simojoki and Birkeli of Norway, the Finnish delegation of bishops, African leaders of every kind, together with a great number of friends and acquaintances and a few relatives from the United States. Nygren was present and addressed the group, as did Peter Brunner, Ernst Kinder, and a great number of other notable and less notable lights.

The procession was interesting—baefkins—Elizabethan ruffs—Bishop Lilje with a silk hat—pectoral crosses weighing a pound or more—flashing purple episcopal vests in evidence. Every color and race present and a dozen languages being spoken. The upshot, however, was that the entire meeting was conducted in English and German. The Swedish and Finnish interpreters spent the convention drinking coffee. Actually all of it perhaps could have been conducted in English, as it seemed to be known by all. Dr. Fry was at his best as Chairman and conducted himself with his usual savoir-faire. He made full use of his vice-presidents and his advisors, and the meetings were generally well-conducted. Some problems developed because of the fact that in all of Finland there wasn’t an assembly hall large enough to hold the kind of groups that wanted to attend. The interpreter services were excellent—all voting was done by show of hands, and no one was allowed to speak more than once on a particular point. This had certain advantages. Certain general impressions could have been gained by the use of an applause meter. Of all of the visiting delegates who were introduced the longest and heartiest applause went to the two representatives of the Catholic Church. Perhaps the most applauded essay was the one by Dr. Clifford Nelson of St. Paul in which he advocated fullest participation in the ecumenical movement on the part of Lutheranism. Bishop Lilje was in charge of the floor committee on theological questions and had the task of dealing with the original paper coming from the Commission on Theology which dealt with justification, as well as the two documents which were produced during the course of the convention. The debate at this point was extremely lively and a special session was held one afternoon in which everybody spoke at great length. When TIME reported that no agreement was reached on the basic

document of the Doctrine of Justification it spoke a partial truth, at least. Much of the debate, however, did not concern the theology of justification, but concerned its relevance to modern man, who is so alienated from church and from all thoughts about God, that to come at him with the Doctrine of Justification seemed to some of the participants—mostly the Germans—an impossibility. There was also a great deal of debate on the question of justification itself. We were happy to hear quite a number of people express their belief in what we have called objective justification or world justification. This, however, was by no means universally accepted. The fear which had been expressed by some that Lutheranism was veering in the direction of salvation by faith plus works, seems to have been unfounded. The only reference made to such a thing was in the original study document. Everyone else seemed to object wholeheartedly to the idea.

The theological discussion was carried on in German and almost entirely by Germans. The constitutional and financial affairs were discussed almost entirely in English. Perhaps this is symptomatic of the state of our theology today. The Germans talked at great length on theological matters and had very dogmatic opinions. The Scandinavians and Americans were generally silent during these discussions. Bishop Bo Gieritz of Sweden distinguished himself however for certain theological pronouncements which he made.

Speaking of the use of English, a story circulated among the delegates that a certain American church leader died and presented his credentials at the pearly gates. He was told by the heavenly Father that before he could enter he would be given forty-eight hours in which to produce a constitution for heaven. After two hours he returned, stating that the task was finished. The heavenly Father looked over the document and then was heard to reply, "I see they have made me first vice-president." This was somewhat illustrative of the European attitude toward American constitutional and legal interests. By comparison, probably, it would have been suggested that theological discussions in heaven will take place in the German language.

TIME was correct, however, in saying that no real consensus was achieved. This is much to be deplored and one wonders whether a consensus could ever have been achieved. There is an unquestionable divergence of opinion on phases of the Doctrine of Justification. Another rather sad note was struck when we Missourians attempted to get some discussion of the doctrine of Scripture on the agenda for the next meeting. This was soundly rejected, and a very general and innocuous subject about the plight of modern man was adopted. While this will provoke much discussion, it can hardly be called controversial. We, Missourians, were given full opportunity to discuss matters both in the discussion groups and in the sectional meetings. There was not always as much opportunity as we would have liked because of the fact that often times the discussions would go off on tangents. Also the

language often presented a problem. However, we were by no means alone in our concerns, and many of the things that we would probably have said were well said by others. This writer was particularly impressed by the floor comments of Professors Kunneth Sommerlath, Dantine. Some of the speeches were whimsical, particularly one by a Czechoslovakian representative, who felt it was necessary to square himself with his communist overlord by informing the assembly that communism was not the only evil in the world.

It was rather tragic to see the poor and almost shackled delegations from Estonia and Latvia with at least one member of each delegation being sent along to spy on the others. Many of us probably never appreciated our freedom so much as when we saw those men rather timidly raise their hands in support of a resolution stating that the assembly considered it contrary to human rights to deny men the privilege of attending a church convention of their own denomination.

A great number of East European delegates had been denied exit visas. The convention was attended by the usual array of typical convention camp-followers from all parts of the world, and judging by the number of beards, long hair, American tourists, and rightists and leftists present, one would gain the impression that at least to many people something important was cooking. One's general impressions would be that the meeting was quite profitable, probably particularly for the European delegates and for the country of Finland. We, Missourians, are going to have to ask some very serious questions regarding our relationship with the Lutheran World Federation. There are certainly some fine Lutherans in the organization. There are many people who would like to have us belong to it and there are, of course, many within our own group who feel the same way.

Missouri and the LWF

THE FOREGOING should serve as a basis for a few points which remain. Missouri will undoubtedly be requested to join the Lutheran World Federation. This request was deferred at our 1959 convention, on several grounds. It is the opinion of this writer that these grounds will have to be reconsidered, and the entire matter of our relationship to the LWF must be looked at very carefully. Three points seem to present themselves.

First, it was our contention when we deferred action before that the LWF was a church and thus it involved us in joining a church organization. In one sense this is entirely impossible. The LWF can become a church in the Roman sense of the word no sooner than countries like Sweden, Finland, Norway, and the territories of Germany can become one nation. To be a Swede is to be a Lutheran, and to be a Lutheran in Sweden is to belong to the National Church of that country. It is in this sense of the

word impossible for the LWF to become a church in a way in which the Missouri Synod, for example, can lose its identity at a church convention by merging with another Lutheran church body. In this sense the LWF cannot be a super church. On the other hand, if we define church as an organization which does mission work, carries on works of charity, Christian education, youth work, sends delegates to ecumenical activities, involves itself in political affairs to some degree, trains church workers—things which a church does, then the LWF is truly a church. The only ecclesiastical activity which the LWF does not seem to perform is that of administering the sacrament of Baptism. The Missouri Synod in joining the LWF would officially not need to be in pulpit and altar fellowship with any other group in the LWF; however, practically the Lutheran Church would be in full fellowship with all of the groups within the LWF and would be working very closely with them in every phase of its activity. This is self evident and impossible to contradict. Thus the question which we faced previously is still with us. This matter has been carefully studied by a special group within the LWF, and although there are those within, as well as those without, who are debating and deploring the fact that the LWF has the characteristics of a super church, it seems that it is the very nature of the case, and it certainly was the conclusion of those who made the study that there is no other alternative. If the LWF is to function as a church organization it is going to have to function as a church does. Hence, and although, we in recent days have deprecated the historic distinction between *cooperatio in externis* and *cooperatio in internis*, the fact remains that there is an amount of *cooperatio* involved in this which is certainly internal as well as external and involves the very heart of the Christian Gospel.

The second point that Missouri is going to have to consider very carefully is the fact which not only Helsinki has revealed, but which the literature coming out of the member churches constantly reveals, that the historic position of the Missouri Synod in which it requires full doctrinal agreement is simply a concept which is unknown to most of the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation. If we are to join this organization we must face the fact that very few of the church bodies in it are either dedicated to, or concerned about, the idea of doctrinal agreement on all matters. Furthermore, if all were concerned about it, it seems quite obvious that it would take generations for anything approximating doctrinal agreement to emerge. One stands in awe of men like Chemnitz and others who were able to get as large a portion of Lutheranism as they did to subscribe to the Book of Concord. This was a task which our modern age appears to be incapable of duplicating. Thus Missouri is going to have to look at its previous historic position very, very carefully. It will have to reconcile itself to the fact that if we can join the Lutheran World Federation on this basis, we face considerable difficulty in negotiating with the synods of

the National Lutheran Council, if we deal with them on a basis on which we require full doctrinal agreement. One would certainly believe that there is far greater opportunity for achieving something that looks like doctrinal agreement, at least, among the synods of America. This seems quite remote, but not nearly so remote as to achieve the same thing on a world Lutheran basis. The problem is not less complicated because of the state-church tie-ups. But here again some very careful thinking ought to be done before either our Commission on Theology, our officers, or our unofficial journals start making statements which could commit us to a course of action which in the final analysis we might not find desirable.

The third point and the most difficult of all, perhaps, is the relationship of the Lutheran World Federation to the various ecumenical movements. Of all of the Lutheran churches who belong to the LWF, numbering over fifty million, only one Synod, a small group in Australia with less than 100,000 members, does not hold membership in the World Council of Churches. Hence, if Missouri joins the Lutheran World Federation, as certainly as day follows night, we will be approached in the very near future, to join the World Council of Churches. The connections with the ecumenical movements appeared everywhere. Not only were representatives of the other denominations present, but the reception which Dr. Nelson's paper received, as well as the many statements made by speakers throughout the sessions, indicated the deep involvement of the LWF with the ecumenical movement. The communion agreements existing between Anglicanism and certain of the Scandinavian Lutheran churches, the ordination of women, the Arnoldshain theses with the Reformed, together with the numerous dialogs which are going on between various Lutheran groups and Reformed and Roman groups at different levels, all add up to the fact that when we join the LWF we also find ourselves in the middle of the ecumenical stream. At this point Missouri must ask itself some pointed questions. We hope that Dr. Nelson's paper will be available for publication so that all of our members have an opportunity to read it. He raises some tremendously live issues and he minces no words. Dr. Sasse was correct two years ago when he said the only question facing Lutheranism today is the question, "Do we want to remain Lutheran?"

One rather sad instance of this was the comparatively insignificant and only recently-created Commission on Youth Work which pleaded for one more term of existence, mainly to see if there was any reason for it to exist. The reason for this state of affairs is that, at least in Europe, youth work has been completely taken over by interdenominational agencies such as Inter-varsity and the Student Volunteer Movement, and for Lutheranism to have its own agency seems a rather unnecessary thing. One wonders about the future of Lutheranism when youth work is being dominated completely by ecumenical agencies. The very close involve-

ment of much of the LWF leadership in the World Council is also, of course, indicative of the problems which we must solve.

We are not here advocating a course of action for Missouri, but we are pointing up three problems which to us appear to be particularly significant and which ought to be solved objectively and intelligently without the fanfare of emotionalism and sentimentality.

J. A. O. P.

The Unused Argument about Religion in the Schools

IN ALL THE comments about *not* reading the Bible in the public schools and *not* teaching religion in tax-supported schools, this editor has not read of anyone pointing out that the use of the public schools, colleges and universities for anti-religious instruction is just as unconstitutional as their use for religious purposes. Some years ago one of my daughters was criticized by a public school teacher for reporting on religious books rather than on secular novels. I have contended for forty years that any direct or indirect efforts of teachers to belittle religious readings and practices constitute a vicious violation of the spirit of the American constitution and the founding fathers. If it be illegal to read the Bible in the public schools, it is just as illegal for teachers with atheistic, materialistic and anti-religious ideas to express the same in the classrooms and on the campuses of public schools and colleges. The United States Supreme Court in 1844 (*Vidal vs. Girard*) declared that Christianity is "not to be maliciously and openly reviled and blasphemed against, to the annoyance of the believers or the injury of the public."

Gould Wickey in *N.L.E.C. News Bulletin*, Sept.-Oct., 1963.
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